

THE CONTRIBUTION OF TAFSĪR AL-MANĀR AND TAFSĪR AL-AZHAR
TOWARD UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF ṬĀ'AH AND ITS
OBSERVANCE: A THEOLOGICAL ENQUIRY

BY
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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has been written
by myself and does not represent the work of any
other person.

(Fadzilah Din)

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List of Abbreviation

Abbreviation	Full Description
<i>Al-Aḥkām Al-Sulṭāniyyah</i>	Al-Mawardī, <i>Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah wa al-Wilāyāt al-Dīniyyah</i>
<i>Al-Ittijāhāt</i>	Al-Rūmī, <i>Al-Ittijāhāt al-Tafsīr fī Al-Qarn al-Rābi‘ ‘Ashar</i>
<i>Al-Kashshāf</i>	Al-Zamakhsharī, <i>Al-Kashshāf ‘an Ḥaqā’iq al-Tanzīl wa ‘Uyūn al-Ta’wīl</i>
<i>Al-Tawḥīd</i>	Al-Fārūqī, <i>Al-Tawḥīd: Its Implications for Thought and Life</i>
<i>Iḥyā’</i>	Al-Ghazzālī, <i>Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn</i>
<i>Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb</i>	Al-Rāzī, <i>Tafsīr al-Fakhr al-Rāzī</i>
<i>Major Themes</i>	Fazlur Rahman, <i>Major Themes of the Qur’ān</i>
<i>OEMIW</i>	<i>The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World</i>
<i>Qurṭubī</i>	Al- Qurṭubī, <i>Al-Jāmi‘ li Aḥkām al-Qur’ān</i>
<i>TAM</i>	Riḍā, <i>Tafsīr al-Manār</i>
<i>TAYA</i>	A. Yusuf Ali, <i>The Holy Qur’ān: Text, Translation and Commentary</i>
<i>TAZ</i>	Hamka, <i>Tafsīr al-Azhar</i>

Notes of Transliteration

System of Transliteration of Arabic Characters

Consonants

ء	'	ز	z	ق	q
ب	b	س	s	ك	k
ت	t	ش	sh	ل	l
ث	th	ص	ṣ	م	m
ج	j	ض	ḍ	ن	n
ح	ḥ	ط	ṭ	ه	h
خ	kh	ظ	ẓ	و	w
د	d	ع	'	ي	y
ذ	dh	غ	gh		
ر	r	ف	f		
ة	h				

ال (article) al-

Long Vowel

أ	ā
و	ū
ي	ī

Short Vowel

a	_____
u	_____
i	_____

Diphthongs

او	aw	اي	iyy	(final form ī)
وي	ay	وي	uww	(final form ū)

Abstract

This thesis analyses a religious concept in Islam, the concept of *ṭā'ah* or obedience and its observance. This study emphasises the contribution of modern exegeses, namely *Tafsīr al-Manār* a very well known and one of the pioneers of modern exegeses, written by Muḥammad 'Abduh and Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, and *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, a very well known Indonesian modern exegesis, written by Hamka. The views of these exegeses or *tafsīr* are also compared with the traditional view.

This thesis explores the issue of the observance of *ṭā'ah* or obedience which forms a certain kind of relationship between Man and God, Man and God's Messenger, and Man and Man (including man and wife). This study shows that *ṭā'ah* to God is absolute. *Ṭā'ah* to God's Messenger is also absolute in so far as his command is in the realm of religion. *Ṭā'ah* between Man and Man on the other hand, is conditional. The issue of *ṭā'ah* between Man and Man concerns a relationship between those who have power and those without, and also between those who command and those who execute the command. This relationship is susceptible to misunderstanding and abuse.

Therefore, this thesis proposes that the important question of what is the scope of *ṭā'ah* should be answered. To answer this question, this thesis discusses in chapter 1 the problems that occur as a result of the improper observance of *ṭā'ah*, *Tafsīr al-Manār* as an example of the contribution of the Muslim Modernists in finding solutions to this issue and the implication that results from the new interpretation. Chapter 2 introduces another important Muslim Modernist figure in Indonesia, Hamka, his thought, and his *tafsīr*, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* which is one of the author's vehicles of disseminating Islamic Modernist ideas in the Malay speaking world.

Chapter 3 discusses *ṭā'ah* or obedience to God and His Messenger and their foundations which establish the basis of to whom or what *ṭā'ah* is to be rendered. Chapters 4 and 5 attempt to compare and contrast the traditionalist and Muslim Modernist views on obedience to leadership and obedience in the family respectively. Each of these discussions is based on Islamic theological foundation, *tawḥīd*, which is also discussed in chapter 3. Semantic analyses of important keywords, which determine the meanings and the conclusion of this thesis are discussed as the chapters move along accordingly.

From the study of the concept of *ṭā'ah* in *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, it can be concluded that *ṭā'ah* is to be rendered to the ideal. *Ṭā'ah* cannot be rendered blindly, and must be preceded by rational and intelligent judgement. Since the foundation of this argument is theological, it presupposes personal accountability not only in this world but also in the hereafter.

Introduction

Discussions of *ṭā'ah* or obedience and its implications are rare. What is found in the *tafāsīr* (Qur'ānic exegeses) both traditional and modern is unsystematic. The lack of discussion on this topic is surprising considering the moral-ethical implication it carries especially when it can easily be abused by those who have the right to command. Furthermore, since *ṭā'ah* deals with the moral-ethical and behavioural aspects of life, its discussion cannot be separated from the discussion on the concept of *tawḥīd* (absolute monotheism) under which are subsumed the discipline of ethics, metaphysics, logic and epistemology. Part of the discussion of *tawḥīd* is personal accountability and Judgement, i.e., eschatology. Perhaps *ṭā'ah* is not properly discussed because it is embedded in Muslim socio-political culture that its virtue is unquestionable and unchallenged. Perhaps we do not see much discussion on this issue because of the danger it poses in upsetting the *status quo*.

However, as more and more Muslims are educated and aware of their rights through studying the original sources of their religion, as well as through secular influences and also aware of the political and social happenings in their surroundings they realise that there is a discrepancy between *ṭā'ah* to other than God and the concept of *tawḥīd*. Although the foundation of *ṭā'ah* has been set in the concept of *tawḥīd* itself and the sayings of the Prophet such as there is no *ṭā'ah* except to what is good or *ma'rūf*, and that there is no *ṭā'ah* to the command which signifies disobedience to God, it is unfortunate that this ethical foundation is not worked out and integrated into the socio-political culture of Muslims in order that *ṭā'ah* could be properly observed.

Therefore Muslims feel that they are under debilitating conditions due to the corruption and abuses which ensue from *ṭā'ah*. Thus there is a genuine need in Muslim society for reform which would free Muslims from this malaise. At least at the academic level, *ṭā'ah* should be re-examined and analysed, perhaps even redefined. The impetus for re-understanding, re-examining, and re-analysing Islamic concepts is provided by Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh and his school of thought by reinterpreting the concept of *tawḥīd* in a rational, holistic and comprehensive manner, as the Shaykh's *Risālah al-Tawḥīd* has proven.¹ Furthermore, this effort is extended to his *tafsīr*, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, one of the earliest modern *tafāsīr* and among the most consulted *tafāsīr* of our time. With the foundation of Islam itself, i.e., *tawḥīd* given a fresh articulation, a lot of positive impact and challenges to traditional Islamic practices follow.

Muḥammad 'Abduh's influence was not only felt in the Middle East but was transported to the Muslim area in Southeast Asia, the Malay archipelago. After the death of 'Abduh in 1905, his ideas circulated for about fifty years in Indonesia and Malaysia particularly, and in the 1960s a similar *tafsīr* written in Malay by Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, was published. The uniqueness of this *tafsīr* is that it deals with Malay Muslim religious, socio-political, historical and cultural issues instead of just the Arab Muslims. Unfortunately, the nature of the topic discussed in this thesis does not allow much more disclosure of the interesting content of *Tafsīr al-Azhar*.

The study of *ṭā'ah* in this thesis employs traditional, and modern *tafāsīr*--namely *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, as well as literature which carries traditional and

¹ Muhammad 'Abduh, *The Theology of Unity*, [trans. by Ishaq Musa'ad and Kenneth Cragg from *Risālah al-Tawḥīd*], (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1966).

modern thought for comparison. Traditional *tafāsīr* are used in order to understand the traditional and the prevalent position, while modern *tafāsīr* are used due to their contribution to new approaches and methodology which make a significant departure from the traditional interpretation of the Qur'an. In addition to that, some related and relevant Islamic concepts are re-examined, analysed and/or borrowed from others. References to related Qur'ānic texts are also made.

The topics involved with the study of *ṭā'ah* in this thesis are *ṭā'ah* or obedience to God and His Messenger, *ṭā'ah* to the *ulū al-amr* or leadership -- spiritual and political, and *ṭā'ah* in the family, to parents and husband. These issues are discussed in *tafsīr* literature even though they are done rather briefly because they are mentioned in the Qur'ān, some explicitly while others are construed as mentioned by the Qur'ān. This thesis is largely concerned with the proper understanding of *ṭā'ah* as a religious observance and the long over-due discussions concerning its abuses that have not been properly addressed. This problem needs an urgent solution considering the rampant abuses practised from the highest to the lowest institutions, i.e., from government to family institutions in Muslim countries. Therefore, this study first asks the question about the foundation or basis of *ṭā'ah*.

It is established in Islam that *ṭā'ah* is to be rendered to God, another way of saying that *ṭā'ah* is to be rendered to the ultimate ideal, good or *ma'rūf*. However, in traditional *tafāsīr* and literature, *ṭā'ah* seems to be more consistently upheld without challenge. Perhaps, this is due to the fact that being written in an environment when Muslim law, power and administration was in order, being a dissident to *ṭā'ah* would be

courting an unfavourable situation. *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar* on the other hand, freely and consistently acknowledge the abuses of *ṭā'ah*, and therefore advocate conditional *ṭā'ah*. This condition, as we gather from *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, is the knowledge of right and wrong, which is pro-active, thus taking into consideration personal accountability and Judgement. The realisation that nobody can be responsible for one's own deeds is unmistakable. However, their non-*ṭā'ah* "except to what is good policy" is rather inconsistent with their treatment of *ṭā'ah* of wife to the husband. We find that *ṭā'ah* to the husband should have been redefined. Although this is a relatively minor problem, it is a methodological problem which brings about an inconsistent result and should be avoided when interpreting religious texts. Perhaps, the difference between traditional and modern *tafsīr* is more in emphasis than real content. While traditional *tafsīr* emphasises *ṭā'ah* as a rule, modern *tafsīr* emphasises the hazardous implication of misplaced *ṭā'ah*.

Nevertheless, the contribution of *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar* in understanding the concept of *ṭā'ah* is immeasurable. They enunciate that *ṭā'ah* is to be rendered to what is good, not to a person. In addition, they also enunciate that the Qur'ān has to be interpreted and reinterpreted to suit social changes. Perhaps they are free to do so because they were written when so called Islamic authority has diminished considerably, political and social conditions have changed, and there is no fear for the disintegration of the unity of the people.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The Problem

In the early 1940s Shaykh Muḥammad Basūnī 'Umran, Imām at the court of the Kingdom of Sambas in Borneo, Indonesia, contributed to *al-Manār*, the well-known Egyptian journal, a letter addressed to Amīr Shakīb Arslān (1869-1946)². In the letter the Shaykh put forward questions regarding the causes of the decline of the Muslims in general and the Muslims in Indonesia and the Malay Peninsula in particular, and the causes of the marvellous progress of the modern nations of Europe, America and Japan. Shakīb Arslān's reply was published in *al-Manār* under the title "*li mādhā ta'akhkhara al-muslimūn*" (Why do Muslims lag behind?) in a series of articles.³

In answering the question, Shakīb Arslān states that the problem is not peculiar to Indonesia and the Malay Peninsula particularly, but affects the Muslim world at large. He then listed a number of reasons for the decline. Among the reasons are lack of effort and complacency, treacherous Muslims, cowardice, widespread ignorance, following misguided religious beliefs and practices, and he mentions separately blind obedience to or blind rejection of religious authority as a danger to Islam. Furthermore,

²Amīr Shakīb Arslān was a member of a leading Lebanese family. He studied at the American school in Shwayfat, then at al-Hikmah school in Beirut. In 1889 a trip to Egypt brought him into contact with 'Abduh and his circle. He was elected to the Ottoman parliament in 1913, but after World War I, he spent much of his time in Europe. He was a link between Middle Eastern and North African Islam, and a proponent of Arab causes at the League of Nations. He published a periodical *La Nation Arabe*. His writings emphasize the Islamic nature of Arab Nationalism. See John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (eds.), *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) 60.

³See the *Introduction* to Amīr Shakīb Arslān, *Our Decline and its Causes* [trans. by M. A. Shakoor], (Lahore: Ashraf Press, 1976; first published 1944) ix. Jutta Bluhm-Warn mentions the question posed by Shaykh 'Umran and provides other examples in her discussion of the relationship between *al-Manār* and the Malay speaking world, in her article, "*Al-Manār and Ahmad Soorkattie*" in Peter G. Riddell and Tony Street, *Islam: Essays on Scripture, Thought and Society*, (Leiden, New York and Köln: Brill, 1997) 295-308.

Shakīb Arslān added that the progress of the modern Western nations and Japan is due to hard work and sacrifice, which is lacking among Muslims. He even suggests that the Muslims study these nations and take them as examples in studying the sciences for material progress.⁴ The underlying problem of what is mentioned by Shakīb Arslān above is the classical problem of the Muslims: belief and action. In Shakīb Arslān's lamentation on the decline of the Muslims and its causes, we can read that it was rather about incorrect belief and incorrect action, a manifestation of the effect of negligence and misunderstanding of '*aqīdah* (Islamic worldview) which is based on '*ilm al-tawḥīd*.

It is significant to note from the above issue, that an Indonesian *imām* asked about the reasons for the malaise of the Muslims that was very much felt in the Malay world at the time and sought after an Islamic solution from a Muslim religious thinker who may have never been to the Malay world and have never seen first hand how Islam was practised in the Malay world. Yet the *imām* felt that there was an Islamic solution applicable universally to all the Muslims everywhere. There was also the sense that the unity of the *ummah* (people) among Muslims still prevails. Therefore, he did not hesitate to ask those among his brothers who knew better. In this case the *imām* sees Shakīb Arslān as representing a religious authority. Thus, Shakīb Arslān, who understood his position, answered in words which can be summarised as follows: the Muslims have not followed the command of religion as dictated by the Qur'ān and authentic Sunnah and have wrongly rendered their obedience to traditions which was limited to space and time, relevant only to the situation before the "closing of the door of *ijtihād*" in the 4th and 5th century Hijrah/ 10th and 11th century C. E. As with all revivalist-reformist ideology, Shakīb Arslān's response, if we may borrow Fazlur Rahman's words,

⁴Ibid., 1-4, 6-8, 10-13, 15, 29, 39-40, 44-45, 48, 68-71, 73-75, 83-86, 96-97, 99, 132, 134.

exhibit[s] deep concern with the socio-moral degeneration of Muslim society; a call to 'go back' to original Islam and shed the superstitions inculcated by popular forms of Sufism, to get rid of the idea of the fixity and finality of the traditional schools of law, and to attempt to perform *ijtihād*, that is, to rethink for oneself the meaning of the original message; and a call to remove the crushing burden of a pre-deterministic outlook produced by popular religion but also materially contributed to by the almost ubiquitous influence of Ash'arite theology.⁵

Reconstruction of Islamic 'Aqīdah (worldview)

To begin with, the issue involved is one of 'going back to original Islam', of following or submitting or obedience to correct authority. The standard of this correct authority is the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Why would returning to original Islam appeal to Muslims? The reason is Muslims believe that the Qur'ān and Sunnah are guidance from God. Therefore, returning to original Islam is like returning to the point of departure or retracing one's step when one gets lost. It has to do with the meaning of Islam itself, submission, i.e., surrendering to God alone. Islam also means peace, safety, and integrity. It also claims to be a religion of *fiṭrah* (primordial nature). The idea is that, as Islam is a religion of *fiṭrah* or a religion which is in accord with nature or the Law of God, the person who follows it, i.e., a religion which is in accord with his/her own nature, will gain, preserve, and develop peace, safety and integrity.⁶ A *muslim* is one who submits to this law. Thus, in the Qur'ān verse 3:83 which states ". . . To Him *aslama* (to be muslim or submit) all the creatures in the heavens and on earth willingly

⁵Fazlur Rahman, "Islam: Challenges and Opportunity", in Alford T. Welch and Pierre Cachia, *Islam: Past Influence and Present Challenge*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1979) 315-330; 317.

⁶See Fazlur Rahman, "Some Key Ethical Concepts of the Qur'ān", *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 2 (1983): 170-185, 172. See also Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico Religious Concept in the Qur'ān*, (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1966) 189-193.

or unwillingly, and to Him they shall all be brought back", indicates that the whole universe is *muslim* because it obeys God's law.

The insistence that Muslims must return to the unadulterated monotheism of the Qur'ān is due to the belief that this "purified Islam" had been ordained by God because it was good for the individual and the society, a good that would be obvious in effects upon social life. It is to this kind of "Islam" that educated, conscious Muslims are able to submit or obey. One that appeals to the mind, denies ultimate contradiction, and corresponds with reality. Since its motivation is truth, it is open to new or contradictory evidence for protection against literalism, fanaticism and stagnation causing conservatism, thus it inclines toward intellectual humility, according to Fārūqī.⁷

If one observes carefully, the call to return to original Islam or original sources of Islam is usually preceded by a crisis. This phenomenon happens often in Islam. Whenever there is a call to return to original Islam, among the important agenda which the reformers embark upon is to discuss correct '*aqīdah*'. The reason is that the issue of '*aqīdah*' is embodied in the science of *kalām* (dialectic theology) or more appropriately '*ilm al-tawhīd*' (science of the Oneness of God) under which are subsumed the disciplines of logic, epistemology, metaphysics and ethics.⁸ Muslims hold that correct belief will result in correct action. Thus, the need for renewal in understanding '*ilm al-tawhīd*' and indirectly, the renewal and enhancing of understanding the Islamic logic, epistemology, metaphysics and ethics. Thus, '*ilm al-tawhīd*' provides the basis for *īmān* or conviction, and the result is *Islām* or submission by way of correct and appropriate action. That is why all orthodox Islamic reformers pay great attention to matters of '*aqīdah*'. Thus, Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328) wrote *Al-'Aqīdah al-Wasafīyyah*, Ibn 'Abd

⁷ Ismā'īl Rājī al-Fārūqī, *Al-Tawhīd: Its Implications for Thought and Life*, (Riyadh and Herndon: International Islamic Publishing House and International Institute of Islamic Thought, 3rd. reprint. 1995) 43-45, [henceforth cited as *Al-Tawhīd*].

⁸ See *ibid.*, 17.

al-Wahhāb (1703/4-1792) wrote *Kitāb al-Tawhīd*, Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905) has his *Risālah al-Tawhīd*, to name just a few known, famous reformers. All these reformers delivered the same message but with different methodologies and emphases in order to make the message relevant to their audience and time. Obviously it is not possible to be original in matters of belief or that which is clearly stated in the Qur’ān and Sunnah especially if one still wants to be considered Muslim.

In the endeavour to return to original Islam, Muḥammad ‘Abduh’s⁹ is one of the pioneering contributions and a rather successful one to jumpstart the Muslims into activities in the 20th century. This endeavour has been continued by successive scholars in interpreting Islamic ‘*aqīdah* in a language and manner relevant to their time. For example, since Muḥammad ‘Abduh, the articulation of the Islamic tenets such as the “pillars of Islam” and the “articles of faith” is rational, taking into account the implications of Islamic beliefs on human behaviour and thought. Even though the articulation of the Islamic tenets is for the purpose of vindicating their necessities, it is no longer an acceptance of the said Islamic tenets without question. The instruction of Islamic tenets is no longer for memorisation but for understanding their meanings and their implications in everyday life.

The Influence of Muḥammad ‘Abduh in Indonesia

The reformist modernist movement in the Malay archipelago is generally accredited to the influence of Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abduh, the Egyptian reformer, and his followers whose group later became known as the *Salafīyyah*; they are also known as Modernist

⁹ For a detail biographical work on Muḥammad ‘Abduh and two other reformers, namely Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, see Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, (London: Oxford University Press, Humphrey Milford, 1933) Chapters 2, 3 and 4, 18-103. See also Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tārīkh al-Ustādh al-Imām al-Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abduh*, (Cairo: Al-Manār Press, 1931) Vol. 1-3. For more information see also Malcolm Kerr, *Islamic Reform*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966) 103, footnote no. 1 which notes other works.

Muslims. It is known that this influence was already felt in Java by 1905. By this time, there was an organization among emigrant Arabs living in Java called *Al-Jāmi‘at al-Khayrīyyah* (Association for the Good) which tried to implement the teachings of Sheikh Muḥammad ‘Abduh.¹⁰ Due to the close relationship between the Arab community and the natives through religious activities and personal ties by marriage, their ideas spilled over.¹¹

However, even prior to the *Salafīyyah* influence, an element of purification of religion similar to the one taught by the *Salafīyyah*, has already spread into the Malay archipelago through native students who studied in the Middle Eastern countries, especially Mecca and University al-Azhar, Cairo. According to Mukti Ali,

these students were in constant contact with their fellow-countrymen in their native land, and their effort had been to a great extent effective in purging Islam in the archipelago from the contamination of heathenish customs and modes of thought that had survived from an earlier period.¹²

He also mentions that a new kind of Malay literature was developed by these students called *kitab* literature which was printed in Mecca and Cairo, and carried to all parts of Indonesia. The *kitab* literature was actually translations into Malay "of all sorts of Arabic dogmatic, juridical and orthodox mystic essays".¹³ Thus, this earlier movement acted as a preparation ground for accepting a wider area of reformation brought by the *Salafīyyah* group.

Most scholars agree that the influence of Muḥammad ‘Abduh and his *Salafīyyah* group reached the Malay archipelago and Indonesia particularly, through various

¹⁰See Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia 1900-1942*, (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1973) 58.

¹¹For information on the Arab community in Indonesia and the nature of their relationship with the natives, see *ibid.*, 56-69.

¹²Mukti Ali, "Modern Islamic Thought in Indonesia", *Islamic Review*, V. 53, 1965, pp. 23-27, 25.

¹³*Ibid.*

periodicals and journals subscribed by the Arab community especially *Al-'Urwat al-Wuthqā* (The Indissoluble Bond) and later *Al-Manār* (The Lighthouse), the most influential of them all.¹⁴ It should also be stressed that there were quite a great number of native Indonesian students as well as emigrant Arabs who studied in the Middle East at this time. A few of them who became prominent in the reformist modernist movements in Indonesia and Malaysia were students of Muḥammad 'Abduh or close acquaintances of Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā.¹⁵ When the Dutch colonial government banned from entering Indonesian territory Arabic reading materials suspected of being tainted with "dangerous" Pan-Islamic ideas, newspapers and periodicals such as *Al-'Urwat al-Wuthqā*, *Al-Jawā'ib*, *Al-Mu'ayyad*, *Al-Siyāsah* and quite a few more managed to be smuggled in through the small fishing harbours of Tuban, in East Java.¹⁶ The fact that the *Muhammadiyah* movement, which was founded based on the teachings of Muḥammad 'Abduh and Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, by Kiyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan, a native Indonesian, showed that the Kiyai must have been familiar with *Tafsīr al-Manār* or 'Abduh's ideas sometime before 1912, the year the *Muhammadiyah* was founded.¹⁷

It is generally accepted that 'Abduh's influence in the Malay archipelago was religious in character. 'Abduh championed *ijtihād* (the right of individual interpretation and judgment), denounced *taqlīd* (the acceptance of the already established *fatwā*, judgments, as final and as having an authoritative character), and took the Prophet and the *Ṣaḥābah* (Companions of the Prophet) as examples in the exercise of religious

¹⁴For other newspapers and/or periodicals imported from the Middle East about the turn of the 20th century see Oemar Amin Hoesin's article, "Sejarah Perkembangan Politik Modern di Indonesia", in *Hikah*, VIII, 20/21 (No. Lerbaren, 1374 [1954]) 24-26, 21.

¹⁵ See Adnan Hj. Nawang, *Za'ba dan Melayu*, (Kuala Lumpur: Berita Publishing Sdn. Bhd., 1998) 12; 13.

¹⁶Mukti Ali, "Modern Islamic Thought in Indonesia", *Islamic Review*, 25.

¹⁷ See Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia 1900-1942*, 76.

practices. This is what reformers in the Malay speaking world also stressed. His ideas and teachings abide in his *tafsīr* (Qur'ān commentary), *Tafsīr al-Manār*, a pioneer in modern *tafsīr*, written by his closest disciple Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā.

Modern Tafsīr

The definition of modern *tafsīr* has been given as *tafsīr* which has diverged markedly from the traditional approach and style of exegesis or commentary even though actually it is still largely a continuation of the great tradition of the traditional *tafsīr* especially in religious matters like theology, law, and ethics. The reason for this is that the references used for modern *tafsīr* are the traditional references like Qur'ānic commentaries by al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), al-Zamakhsharī (d.1144), Ibn al-Kathīr (d. 1373) and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209) for example, the *ḥadīth* collections by al-Bukhārī, Muslim and/or the rest of the well known *ḥadīth* collections like *Sunān Abū Dawūd* or *Musnad Ibn Ḥanbal*, the dictionaries by Ibn Manẓūr (d. 1311), and al-Fīrūzābādī (d. 1414), a few books on sciences of the Qur'ān by al-Zarkashī (d.1391) and al-Suyūṭī (d.1505) and other *kutub al-turāth* or books of heritage in other fields. This happens not only because *kutub al-turāth* is generally highly regarded by Muslims but also because it is part of the prerequisite the scholars of old came up with, an instrument with which to control the soundness of Qur'ānic commentary. For example, it is listed in the books of the sciences of the Qur'ān that a *mufasssīr* or exegete must have at least these important qualifications when writing a *tafsīr* namely: sound belief; well-grounded in the knowledge of Arabic and its rules as a language, including its idioms and usage during the Prophet's time; well-grounded in other sciences that are connected with the study of the Qur'ān for example *'ulūm al-ḥadīth* (the sciences of *ḥadīth*) and the "occasions of revelation"; and possessed of the ability for precise comprehension. In

addition, he should abstain from the use of mere opinion; begin the *tafsīr* of the Qur'ān with the Qur'ān; seek guidance from the words and explanations of the Prophet; refer to the reports from the *Ṣahāba* (the Prophet's Companions); consider the reports from the *tābi'ūn* (the generation after the Companions); consulting existing *tafsīrs*; and consult the opinions of other eminent scholars.¹⁸ For the purpose of identification, we borrow Mustansir Mir's definition of traditional and modern *tafsīr* i.e., traditional *tafsīr* refers to all *tafāsīr* written within the early Islamic centuries to the end of the 19th century, and modern *tafāsīr* refers to all exegeses written in the twentieth-century.¹⁹

The difference between modern and traditional *tafsīr* is in their approach and style. According to Jansen,

Before 'Abduh, the interpretation of the Koran was mainly an academic affair. Commentaries were written by scholars for other scholars. Understanding a commentary required detailed knowledge of the technicalities and terminology of Arabic grammar, Moslem law and dogmatics, the Traditions of the Prophet Mohammad and his contemporaries, and the Prophet's biography. The commentaries on the Koran had become encyclopedias of these sciences, or rather excerpts of encyclopedias. It took an enormous amount of intellectual energy to profit from the knowledge stored up in the existing commentaries, which treated anything but the "plain" and "literal" meaning of the Koran. To this kind of scholarly exegesis Abduh objected on principle.²⁰

The above statement is a common complaint among Muslim scholars regarding traditional *tafsīr*. Consequently, the new kind of *tafsīr* emerged. However, it is

¹⁸See Ahmad Von Denffer, *‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān*, (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1985) 125; See also Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979) 2nd. ed., 41; Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, (Singapore: Pustaka Nasional Pte. Ltd.: 1993) 2nd. reprint, Vol. 1, 28 [henceforth cited as *TAZ*].

¹⁹Mustansir Mir, "The sūra as unity: A twentieth century development in Qur'ānic exegesis", in *Approaches to the Qur'ān*, G. R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef (eds.), (London and New York: Routledge, 1993) 211.

²⁰J. J. G. Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980) 18-19.

precisely because traditional *tafsīr* make good encyclopedias that they are referred to until today. Their superfluity and detail is of great importance and play an important role in contributing to the continuity of modern day Islamic scholarship, the understanding and the practice of Islam.

Modern commentaries are still encyclopaedias, but to a lesser degree due to their change of purpose, which is to be an instrument of guidance to Muslims of their time in understanding the immediate Qur'ānic injunctions without the clutter of academic technicalities and barriers.²¹ Modern commentaries arose to provide solutions to the various problems that Muslims were facing long before the turn of the 20th century by the call to return to the Qur'ān and Sunnah. In order to make the Qur'ān easily understood by Muslims, the commentaries provided have to be 'reader friendly' for the common people who can read at that time. The commentaries thus discuss directly the pressing issues of their time concerning faith, religion, moral, social, economic and politics; and the need to interpret anew some of the principles of the Qur'ān. This type of commentary is called practical *tafsīr* by Jansen, or by its Arabic name *tafsīr ijtīmā'ī* (lit. sociological commentary). *Tafsīr al-Manār*, one of the early commentaries of Muslim Modernists, and also a subject we discuss in this thesis, falls under this category. One might add, that *tafsīr ijtīmā'ī* is one of the most important innovations and contributions of Muslim Modernists to Islam. It reflects the social changes in

²¹The Qur'ān itself claims that it is guidance for mankind for example in 2: 2, 185; 3:4 etc. This claim is repeated by many modern commentaries whose authors want to emphasize that *tafsīr* should become guidance to mankind. See Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Ḥakīm*, famous by *Tafsīr al-Manār* [henceforth cited as *TAM*], (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, n.d.) Vol.1, 4.

Muslim society. On the contribution of Muslim Modernists to Qur'ānic commentaries, Fazlur Rahman says,

The record of genuine Muslim Modernists is thoroughly honourable and, indeed, their service to Islam is, in a sense, much greater than that of the Revivalists. It is difficult to imagine what Islam and its socio-political institutions-- including the all-important sector of education in Muslim countries-- would have been today without the activity of these men. To create positive links between certain key Western institutions-- democracy, science, women's education-- and the Islamic tradition through the very sources of that tradition, namely the Qur'ān and the Prophet, is no mean achievement by any standards. And the creation of these links is by no means artificial or forced: How many will deny today that the numerous Qur'ānic verses that talk about the exploitability of all nature for the benefit of man have a direct bearing on the cultivation of science? [T]hat the Qur'ānic passages about egalitarianism and justice are directly conducive to the acceptance of a democratic system of government? [O]r that the tremendous thrust of the Qur'ānic teaching on the subject of strengthening the weaker segments of society-- the poor, slaves, etc.-- and the attention it pays in particular to women and to the regulation of relationships between the sexes has direct relevance for human welfare in general and the increasing role of women in today's Muslim society? Even on the subject of monogamy, where conservatives and neo-Revivalist have unanimously accused the classical Modernist's of patently sacrificing 'Islam' to the Western social values, the Modernists' handling of the Qur'ānic teaching has been not only original but also valid even though the actual formulation of their arguments may need improvement here and there.²²

Modern *tafsīr* is categorized into several tendencies namely scientific commentary (*tafsīr 'ilmī*), thematic commentary (*tafsīr mawḍū'ī*), philological and literary commentary (*tafsīr adabī*), and as mentioned above, practical commentary (*tafsīr*

²²Fazlur Rahman, "Islam: Challenges and Opportunities", in Alford T. Welch and Pierre Cachia (eds.), *Islam: Past Influence and Present Challenge*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1979) 315-330, 320-321.

'ijtimā'ī).²³ Most work of modern *tafsīr* is a combination of all these tendencies but with different emphases. Among these commentaries, scientific and philological commentaries are remnants of the traditional commentaries, whereas, thematic commentary or thematic interpretation was not employed in the traditional *tafsīr* considering its loyalty to the approach of interpreting atomistically, i.e., interpreting verse by verse from the first to last. Thus thematic commentary is one of the innovations in modern *tafsīr*. Fazlur Rahman's book, *Major Themes of the Qur'ān*, is a good example of a true thematic *tafsīr* on the important themes of the Qur'ān which has important bearings on Islamic 'aqīdah.²⁴ The book refers to all the relevant verses of the Qur'ān on specific topics and discusses them accordingly, thus giving the reader a more holistic view of the particular topics. As for scientific *tafsīr*, its main contribution is opening a way for those who were oblivious to the wonders of nature mentioned in the Qur'ān to appreciating it. The exegetes of scientific commentaries have tried to explain the verses of the Qur'ān which are related to nature according to the knowledge available in their own time.²⁵ Most commentators acknowledge that the Qur'ān would be easily understood with more scientific findings. Due to modern scientific findings

²³For works on modern *tafsīr*, see Fahd b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Sulaymān al-Rūmī, *Ittijāhāt al-Tafsīr fī al-Qarn al-Rābi' 'Ashar* [Trends of Commentaries in the 14th Century Hijrah, henceforth cited as *Ittijāhāt*], (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1997), 3rd. ed., Vol. 1-3; Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1962); J. J. G. Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980); Mustansir Mir, *Coherence in the Qur'ān*, (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1986); J. M. S. Baljon, *Modern Muslim Koran Interpretation (1880-1960)*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1961).

²⁴In the introduction to his *Major Themes of the Qur'ān*, (Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980) page xi, Fazlur Rahman says, "More recently, non-Muslims as well as Muslims have produced topical arrangements of the Qur'ānic verses; although these can in varying degree serve the scholar as a source or an index, they are of no help to the student seeking to acquaint himself with what the Qur'ān has to say on God, man, or society. It is therefore hoped that the present work will respond to the urgent need for an introduction to major themes of the Qur'ān".

²⁵The fact that scientific *tafsīr* or *tafsīr 'ilmī* antedates the impact of Western technology and scientific findings is proven by the existence of quotations from the works of Sharaf al-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Abū al-Faḍl al-Mursī (1174-1257) preserved in Suyūṭī's *Itqān*. See Fahd b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Sulaymān al-Rūmī, *Ittijāhāt*, Vol. 2, 558. See also J. J. G. Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt*, 37.

also, scientific *tafsīr* has included jurisprudential (*fiqhī*) elements when issues such as test tube babies, cloning, and organ transplant are discussed since these issues have moral implications. Philological *tafsīr* on the other hand is concerned with the correct, precise and relevant meaning of some of the words of the Qur'ān which is important for enlightenment and correct understanding of the text. Sometimes a new interpretation of the meaning of a word is given, giving the text a new implication. For example, in interpreting Sūrah 3 (*Āli 'Imrān*): 3 which reads, "It is He who sent down to you in truth, the Book [i.e., the Qur'ān], confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Torah and the Evangel before this, as a guide to mankind, and He sent down *al-Furqān*", 'Abduh interpret *al-Furqān* to mean reason, by "which man discern between truth and falsity".²⁶ The root word of *furqān* is *f-q-r*, which means to discriminate, or to make distinction between truth and falsity. Traditional commentaries generally consider *furqān* to mean revealed book or books.²⁷ In this we can see 'Abduh's originality and departure from the traditional *tafsīr*. Another example is in the interpretation of the word *al-awtād* in Sūrah 89 (*al-Fajr*): 6-11, which read:

Do you not see how your Lord dealt with the 'Ād people. Of the (city of) Iram with lofty pillars. The like of which were not produced in the land? And with the Thamūd who cut out rocks in the valley? And with Pharaoh, Lord of *al-awtād*? (All) these transgressed beyond bounds in the lands.

Sayyid Quṭb, following 'Abduh, has interpreted that *al-awtād* refers to the pyramids particularly and the pharaonic buildings in general.²⁸ *Awtād* is the plural of *watad*

²⁶Quoted by J. J. G. Jansen, in *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt*, 22; as the words of Riḍā on 'Abduh's interpretation of the word *furqān*.

²⁷ See *ibid*.

²⁸See Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, (Cairo and Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 1992), Vol. 7, 3904. See also Muḥammad 'Abduh, *Tafsīr Juz' 'Amma*, [trans. into Malay by Muhammad Bagir from the Arabic *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm (Tafsīr Juz' 'Amma)*], (Bandung: Penerbit Mizan, 1999) 159.

which means peg or stake. Its root word means to fasten or to secure.²⁹ It is significant to note that the Qur'ān refers to mountains as pegs or stakes of the Earth.³⁰ We speculate that the general shape or form of mountains and pyramids may be the reason why they are referred to as *awtād*. Al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr, on the other hand, interpret *awtād* to mean military forces of the pharaoh who were extremely cruel, they used to drive stakes through their enemies.³¹ Looking at the preceeding verses before the *awtād* verse is mentioned, where the emphasis is upon ancient ruins of the various people, interpreting *awtād* as pyramids seems more relevant. In addition, modern scholars still largely depend upon pre-Islamic Arabic poetry or the famous *Mu'allaqāt*, classical dictionaries the like of Ibn Manẓūr's *Lisān al-'Arab*, and al-Zamakhsharī's commentary, *al-Kashshāf*, to write a philological commentary.³²

There is another tendency or approach in *tafsīr* writing which is making a comeback in 20th century *tafsīr*. This is the idea that the Qur'ānic *sūrahs* in their present arrangements possess *naẓm* (order, coherence or unity), and "this *naẓm* is regarded as hermeneutically significant".³³ This affects the interpretation of the Qur'ān significantly. In many cases, a *naẓm* based interpretation overrides an interpretation

²⁹Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, (ed. J. Milton Cowan), (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1980) 1046.

³⁰ See A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'ān: Text Translation and Commentary*, (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1975) 1672, [henceforth cited as *TAYA*]—Sūrah 78 (*Al-Naba'*):6-7 which read, "Have We not made the Earth as a wide expanse, And the mountain as pegs?"

³¹See Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* named *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1992), Vol. 12, 570. See also 'Imād al-Dīn Abī al-Fidā' Ismā'īl b. Kathīr al-Qarshī al-Dimashqī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, (Beirut: Dār al-Khayr, 1991) Vol. 4, 539.

³²See J. J. G. Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt*, 55, 58-59.

³³ Mustansir Mir, "Tafsīr", in John L. Esposito (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1995) Vol.4, 169-176; 174.

based on a certain "occasion of revelation".³⁴ Of course this approach belongs to the technical realm in the study of the sciences of the Qur'ān under the subject of interconnection of *āyāt* (sg. *āyah*) or verses and the *suwar* (sg. *sūrah*) or chapters, known as *'ilm al-munāsabah*. *'Ilm al-munāsabah* did not acquire the status of mainstream exegetical thought among traditional *mufasssirs*. According to Zarkashī (1344-1391), due to the difficult nature of the subject, very few scholars had concerned themselves with it.³⁵ However, even though not many traditional scholars apply this method extensively in their *tafsīr*, discussion of *'ilm al-munāsabah* and related *ḥadīth* concerning this science of the Qur'ān can be found.³⁶ Among the most important scholars of this thought in the modern period according to Mustansir Mir are Ashraf 'Alī Thanavī (1863-1943), Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī (1863-1930) and Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī (b. 1906) of Indo-Pakistan; Muḥammad 'Izzat Darwaza (1888-1984) and Sayyid Quṭb (1906-1966) of Egypt; and Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī (1903-1981) of Iran.³⁷

*Tafsīr al-Manār*³⁸

Its title is *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Ḥakīm* but famously known as *Tafsīr al-Manār* because in the beginning it was published in the journal *al-Manār*. It was published in book form for the first time in 1927 in Cairo in twelve volumes. It is also known as *Tafsīr*

³⁴ Ibid.,

³⁵ See Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī, *Al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* [edited by Muḥammad Abū Faḍl Ibrāhīm], (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1982) Vol. 1, 37.

³⁶ See Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, (Cairo: n.p., 1900), Vol. 2, 176-179.

³⁷ For more information on this subject see Mustansir Mir, "The sūra as unity: A twentieth century development in Qur'ānic exegesis", 211-224. See also *Coherence in the Qur'ān* by the same author.

Muḥammad ‘Abduh because it carries mostly his ideas and thought. *Tafsīr al-Manār* was written by Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, Muḥammad ‘Abduh’s closest disciple, who was also the founder and publisher of the journal *al-Manār*. The *tafsīr* was originally Muḥammad ‘Abduh’s lessons in *tafsīr* at University al-Azhar, transcribed by Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, then verified and edited by ‘Abduh before it was published. The *tafsīr* also contains Riḍā’s own views on the subjects discussed in the *tafsīr* with clear indications to separate his opinions and views from the Shaykh’s. Unfortunately, they managed to work together only up to the fourth *sūrah*, *Sūrah al-Nisā’* due to the death of ‘Abduh. After that, Riḍā worked on his own until *Sūrah Yūsuf*, the twelfth *sūrah*. Thus, the *tafsīr* was incomplete.

As mentioned earlier, *Tafsīr al-Manār* is one of the pioneers in modern *tafsīr* and one of the most influential ones. It has become an authority and an important reference among Muslims in Qur’ānic and Islamic studies.³⁹ From a methodological point of view, *Tafsīr al-Manār* combines the use of all the approaches of modern *tafsīr* in its explication of the verses of the Qur’ān. It explicates the Qur’ān in a holistic manner, using various verses concerning the same topic whenever necessary to make its description and references clear to the reader. Most of the time, it explains the connection of verses from beginning to the next, and so on, which is called atomistic linear connection. And yet another contribution of *Tafsīr al-Manār* is its improvement upon the style of Arabic writing particularly in traditional Arabic sciences such as *tafsīr*

³⁸For a detail information on the content, methodology and criticisms on *Tafsīr al-Manār* and other *tafsīr* of the same school, see See Fahd b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān Sulaymān al-Rūmī, *Ittijāhāt*, Vol.2, 705-848. See also, Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, 214-255.

³⁹ See Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt*, 20.

writing. Much of the complaint on traditional Qur'ānic commentary has also been that the writing is long winded and full of difficult grammatical and syntactical applications which makes reading unnecessarily difficult.⁴⁰ 'Abduh and Riḍā were able to make *tafsīr* easier to understand and to provide clear guidance for the reader.

What makes *Tafsīr al-Manār* invaluable to Muslims at large lies in its main focus, which is to free the Muslims from *taqlīd* (blind following). Its aim is to encourage the Muslims to understand their religion from its sources, the Qur'ān and Sunnah, as understood by the early Muslims. Because of this, we do not find in *Tafsīr al-Manār* the numerous opinions and views of scholars, which contradict each other as in traditional commentaries. By doing this, the author also makes the Qur'ān the source of 'aqīdah or faith, and law, instead of legitimising or justifying the views of any particular *madhhab* (pl. *madhāhib*) or school of thought through the Qur'ān. *Tafsīr al-Manār* abandoned the practice of traditional commentators who supplement their commentaries with other sources of reference, in order to furnish the details to Qur'ānic stories with biblical references. *Tafsīr al-Manār* affirms the attitude that since the Qur'ān highlighted only the moral lessons of biblical stories, there is no need for the details because the message the Qur'ān wants to convey is already clear. Because of its condemnation of *taqlīd*, *Tafsīr al-Manār* is also very critical of the *riwāyāt* (sg. *riwāyah*, stories pertaining to the Companions of the Prophet and their followers) and even *aḥādīth* (sg. *ḥadīth*) of the Prophet. The authors of *Tafsīr al-Manār* insist that the verses of the Qur'ān should be explicable through reason. Thus, where the meaning of the Qur'ān is not fully understood, the authors interpret it rationally. For example,

⁴⁰This is 'Abduh's and Riḍā's own criticism concerning traditional *tafsīr*. See *TAM*, Vol. 1, 4.

issues such as the miracles of the prophets, heaven and hell, and the angels were all interpreted rationally and thus attracted criticisms from traditional quarters. *Tafsīr al-Manār* is also known and praised for its concerns about the challenges the Muslims were facing at the turn of the 20th century, such as issues on politics, moral and religious questions, the position of women, education, etc., which in a nutshell is a result of the backwardness of the Muslims in all spheres of modern living, as some Muslims claim. As a result, *Tafsīr al-Manār* is considered under the category of *tafsīr ‘aqlī wa al-ijtimā’ī* (rational and practical *tafsīr*).⁴¹

***Ṭā’ah*: The Scope of Study**

We presented all of the above information because it serves a preliminary function to the core topic of this thesis, the concept of *ṭā’ah* or obedience because there is a very clear connection between Islamic Modernism and the new approaches to the interpretation of the Qur’an. However, we have mentioned them only briefly because the major concern of this study is not *‘aqīdah per se*, nor *tafsīr*, nor the Muslim Modernist movement and its proponents, but what *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar* expound about *ṭā’ah*. What is expressed about *ṭā’ah* is very much related to *‘aqīdah* and the kind of *tafsīr* and Islamic movement which brought about its idea as a result of the shift in Islamic worldview. Since *tafsīr* is related to the Qur’ān, some parts of this thesis will deal with issues related with the philology of the Qur’ān. *Tafāsīr* other than

⁴¹See al-Rūmī, *Ittijāhāt*, Vol.2, 705-848. See also, Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, Vol. 2, 214-255.

Tafsīr al-Manār and *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, as well as other material will be used for comparison and support.

The concept of *ṭā'ah* is a very specific subject, which is part of the bigger concept of Islam or submission, discussed in the subject of *'aqīdah*. It has an axiological meaning in one's belief and action. It is also related to Islamic eschatology where the emphasis is on individual responsibility for one's action. The concept of *ṭā'ah*, to this writer's knowledge, has not been written about and discussed properly and academically on its own merit. We speculate that there is a fundamental reason for this, i.e., that this issue has a direct relation to the way Muslims run their socio-political life and the proper understanding of the issue would demand a certain action that could cause the absolute power and authority of those concerned to be considerably diminished. The understanding of the concept of *ṭā'ah* which is not from the proper Qur'ānic perspective can be used as a mechanism of control for those in power.

This is especially true considering that Muslim governments, whether the ones which claim to be democratic or absolute monarchies are largely authoritarian, varying only in degrees. This is to say that it is difficult to change a socio-political culture of more than one thousand years even after almost one hundred years of Muslim Modernist reformers calling for change. This problem, we speculate, is the result of the acquired habit of Muslims in "committing idolatry", to speak in Islamic religious terms, of being totally subservient to an individual leader. As a general rule, any observer could see that Muslims have created a culture of flatterers where politics is concerned. People seek to "butter up" their leader. He is not to be criticised in the slightest. He is

even allowed to interfere in areas outside his jurisdiction. Whatever he says is echoed. He is praised for his cleverness and perfection until he becomes a cult figure. Even if he was a person of good disposition before, after ten to fifteen years in office, he began to think that he is invincible and infallible, and by this time had abused his power. This condition ran from top to lower offices. One can easily verify the above remark by studying the political situation in any Muslim country for example, from the time of the country's independence, in addition to the personality of a few of their top political leaders and their careers.

It is interesting to note that this issue of *tā'ah* is portrayed in *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, considered one of the invaluable classical Malay epics which was thought to be written after the fall of the Sultanate of Malacca to the Portuguese in 1511 CE. According to Muhamad Yusuf Hashim, although this epic was written during the fall of the Malay Sultanate of Malacca, it retained, exposes and potrayes some key conceptual ideals about Malay society and its vision of political order.⁴² What most concerns us here is how it deals with the issue of obedience to higher authority, i.e., the sultan. This epic clearly demonstrates recognition of these concepts, ethics and justice. However, it potrays that obedience to the sultan transcends these concepts. The command of the sultan must be obeyed no matter how unethical and unjust. This epic reveals the tension that continues to exist in Malay thinking between total and unquestionable obedience to the ruler and how to carry out justice which still dominates Malay thought even at the present time.

⁴² Abdul Halim Bandan, *Hikayat Hang Tuah* (Panduan Ulangkaji Komprehensif STPM [A Comprehensive Revision Guide for A level]), (Kuala Lumpur: Cahaya Pantai Sdn. Bhd., 1994) 2.

The most significant aspect of the epic in relation to the issue of *ṭā'ah* concerns the protagonist, Hang Tuah, a high ranking warrior (*hulubalang*) who serves the sultan obediently. By the command of the sultan, Hang Tuah had to kill his best friend, Hang Jebat, another *hulubalang*, who went amok against the sovereign. For Hang Tuah, "it is not of Malay character to be disobedient to the king".⁴³ However, the reason Hang Jebat went against the sultan was due to his anger to what he considered an injustice of the sultan towards Hang Tuah.⁴⁴ Hang Tuah was close to the sultan and his loyal services to the sultan and his country surpassed anyone else's.⁴⁵ Unfortunately, due to jealousies from other colleagues, Hang Tuah was accused of a conspiracy against the sultan and therefore ordered to be put to death without thorough investigation of the matter. Hang Jebat's principle with regard to the absolute monarch was "a just king is to be obeyed; an unjust one is to be opposed".⁴⁶ Unfortunately, this is considered a blameworthy character. In the end, Hang Tuah killed Hang Jebat, his best friend whom he considered his blood brother, because the latter was disobedient or "*derhaka*" to the king. While there are other details to the story, the lesson to be learned is disobedience to the king or one in authority for the right or wrong reason is very dangerous.

As we have mentioned earlier, the concept of *ṭā'ah* has a socio-political implication, thus it does not only affect the government institutions, but all areas which involve the power to control. The religious scholars for example, have power over the masses in that the latter depend on the former for spiritual guidance and to take ethical

⁴³ Ibid., 28.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 33-34.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 28.

stands. Improper rendering of obedience or *ṭā'ah* to religious scholars with self-interest, who in turn are obedient to an unjust ruler, for instance, could cause social injustices.

The idea of *ṭā'ah* has been inculcated in the individual in Muslim culture within the family institution since childhood. Parents are to be obeyed, especially the mother, while married women on the other hand have to obey their husbands. As improper rendering of *ṭā'ah* in the social context could corrupt and cause injustice to society and the individuals in it, improper rendering of *ṭā'ah* in the family context causes injustices at individual levels.

Consequently, we have chosen to study the concept of *ṭā'ah* according to two Muslim Modernists' *tafsīrs*: *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Ḥakīm*, better known as *Tafsīr al-Manār*, and *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, an Indonesian *tafsīr*. *Tafsīr al-Manār* as mentioned earlier, is one of the first modern *tafsīr* which has become authoritative in status. *Tafsīr al-Azhar* was written by an Indonesian scholar, Haji Abdul Malik bin Abdul Karim bin Amrullah better known by his acronym Hamka, who will be discussed in Chapter Two.

The reason for choosing to study the *tafsīr* genre and particularly modern *tafsīr* is due to the very nature of these two *tafāsīr*. They are *tafsīr ijtīmā'ī*, and as a whole reflect the social conditions of their time which is relatively recent to the present, and therefore their comments are relevant to the present condition. Traditional *tafāsīr*, which deal mostly with the theological and/or legal rather than sociological aspects of issues, does not present a complete outlook. In addition, the fact that both *tafāsīr* claim to be neutral to any of the traditional *madhāhib* make them more objective; although in

reality we may label them as proponents of the rational *madhhab*. In this thesis, we will discuss traditional premises concerning *ṭā'ah* from traditional sources, as well as modern sources, and compare them with our chosen *tafāsīr*.

Study Plan

If we are to extract the teachings of the Qur'ān by approaching it in a holistic manner, as prescribed by Modernist Muslim scholars, we have to look at the concept of *ṭā'ah* which we want to study in relation to *ṭā'ah* to God and His Messenger since this is the fundamental principle in the Islamic worldview. Thus, after the general introduction which we provided in Chapter One and introducing *Hamka* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, in Chapter Two, we will discuss *Ṭā'ah to God and His Messenger* in Chapter Three, followed by *Ṭā'ah to the Ulū al-Amr* in Chapter Four, and *Ṭā'ah in the Family* in Chapter Five. Finally, there is a conclusion to this thesis which consists of some analysis of this topic. In each of the last three chapters, relevant verses of the Qur'ān and commentaries by our chosen *tafāsīr* will be discussed. Other materials are used to compare, contrast, and support this study.

The Qur'ānic translation used in this study is by A.Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'ān: Text Translation and Commentary*, (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1975) with this writer's slight modification for clarity of meaning. The transliteration used follows the standard transliteration convention for Arabic. However, since the Qur'ān is based on its reading rather than writing, we have made a distinctive difference when transliterating Qur'ānic verses. For example, it is read, "*al-ḥamdu li 'l-lāhi rabbi 'l-*

'*ālamīn*' instead of the standard transliteration form, "*al-ḥamd li allāh rabb al-
'ālamīn*".

Significance of Study

It is clear that the issue of obedience or *ṭā'ah* has a far-reaching implication in theory and practice. It covers a wide area starting from one's religious worldview or '*aqīdah*', which includes one's moral-ethical values, which then translates into one's behaviour at a personal, religious, socio-political and cultural level.

The purpose of this study is to challenge the prevailing traditional notion of *ṭā'ah* which is against the *tawḥīdic* notion because it has been stretched too far, and therefore needs a new interpretation based in the Qur'ān. The main thesis of this study is that *ṭā'ah* or obedience is not to be rendered to any individual or a particular group, but to the virtuous ideas and actions supported by both reason and revelation. Therefore, when convention calls for rendering obedience to a leader, power, or authority, obedience should actually be rendered to the position of leadership or authority which fulfils its duties and responsibilities.

Since the issues which will be dealt with in this study are of immediate and practical concern to Muslims at large, we hope to present a clear perspective on *ṭā'ah* by the chosen authoritative scholars and an analysis of them so that we may have a practical, coherent and relevant idea of *ṭā'ah* within an Islamic worldview. In addition, this study would be stating an important Islamic principle, i.e., *ṭā'ah* is only to God and

His Messenger, which although it is already obvious for those familiar with *'ilm al-tawhīd*, would be useful for the development of Islamic social sciences.

CHAPTER TWO

Hamka

Intoduction

We take the opportunity, in this chapter, to introduce Hamka (acronym for Haji Abdul Malik bin Abdul Karim bin Amrullah), the writer of *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, who was an important Islamic leader and a very popular figure in the Malay speaking world.⁴⁷ His importance lies in the fact that he was one of the principal figures who espoused the propagation of Islamic modernist ideas into mainstream Malay Islamic thought. He is considered by many as a leading actor in the history of Indonesia in particular,⁴⁸ who also contributed to the recent Islamic history of the Malay archipelago. Therefore, we feel that there is a need to present briefly the life of this interesting figure especially since he was from Southeast Asia where scholars that Muslims can be truly be proud of are not well known. In presenting Hamka's life, it is not sufficient to discuss only his educational background. Historical and other events, which shaped and developed his intellect must be included, in order to appreciate and understand how he came to be who he was.

Hamka's Childhood and Early Education

Born on 16 February, 1908 in the village of Sungai Batang, Maninjau, in Minangkabau in West Sumatra, Abdul Malik b. Abdul Karim b. Amrullah (*alias* Hamka) had an interesting childhood. His father, Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah (*alias* Haji Rasul), one

⁴⁷See B. J. Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia* (Leiden: Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, 1971) 148.

⁴⁸See James Rush, "Hamka dan Indonesia Moderen", *Panji Masyarakat*, no.379 (Dec.1982) 43-47, 43. See also Deliar Noer, "Hamka dan Sejarah" in Panitia Peringatan Buku, *Kenang-kenangan 70 tahun Buya Hamka*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1978) 106-117, 107.

of the important pioneers in modern Islamic reform in Indonesia, was a famous and much respected religious teacher, who travelled a great deal to teach in many different parts of Minangkabau. Living in a matrilineal society, Hamka's maternal family especially his uncles, had more claims on him than his own father. Thus he lived with his maternal grandparents in his early childhood instead of with his parents. In his biography of his father, *Ayahku*, he said that whenever his parents came home to their village, there was a distance between them and him. He observed that when his father was around, "people lowered their heads in respect, women folk were busy cooking because many visitors came to the house, and I was not allowed to go near".⁴⁹ Young Hamka was expected to sit and listen to his father's lectures quietly. The image he had of his father was one of a fearsome and respected figure.⁵⁰ As for his mother, Safiah⁵¹ binti Bagindo Nan Batuah, she was near enough a child herself to know about the needs of her young son. As a result, Hamka himself preferred to follow his maternal grandfather fishing, and playing by the river than to listen to his father. From his grandfather, known as Bagindo Nan Batuah⁵², he learned some *adat* proverbs and poetry, learned the *pencak silat* (a Malay martial art), Malay dances and songs, and listened to his stories while they were together.⁵³

As with most children from Muslim families with even the slightest religious or traditional consciousness, let alone those from very religious families, Hamka's earliest education comprised of learning to read and/or memorise the Qur'ān at his father's house, taught by his elder sister, Fatimah. He had started living with his parents when

⁴⁹Hamka, *Ayahku*, (Jakarta: Umminda, 1982) 4th reprint, 19.

⁵⁰Hamka, *Kenang-Kenangan Hidup*, (Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Antara, 1982) 7-8.

⁵¹His mother, Safiah was the younger sister of his father's first wife, Raihana, a much adored wife, who died in Mecca a few months after her second child was born and died at birth. His father married Safiah on the advice of the *adat* people for the sake of his eldest daughter with Raihana, so that the child (named Fatimah) would not have a stepmother she did not know. Safiah was married at 15 years of age and had Hamka at 16.

⁵²Bagindo Nan Batuah (lit. he who is lucky) is his title as an *adat* noble, not his name.

⁵³Hamka, *Kenang-kenangan Hidup*, 9.

they moved to Padang Panjang in 1914. The following year, when he was seven years old, he was enrolled in *Sekolah Desa* (village school) instead of the Dutch government school attended by children of the Dutch and Indonesian officials, because of his father's religious sentiment.⁵⁴ In 1916, the first religious school to use the modern system of education, *Sekolah Diniyyah* was established by Zainuddin Lebai al-Yunusiyyah, one of his father's most gifted students, in Padang Panjang.⁵⁵ Hamka attended this school in the afternoon and enjoyed learning there. However, after two years, Hamka had to follow his father back to his village in Maninjau, without his education being completed. After that he was enrolled in his father's school, *Sumatera Ṭawālib*, which the latter founded in 1918, after his return from his first visit to Java.⁵⁶ According to Hamka, he was enrolled in *Sumatera Ṭawālib* because his father wanted him to quickly become an 'ālim.⁵⁷

Another reason for changing schools, though it may have been a minor one, was that Hamka was a "naughty boy". Like other boys, he liked to play a lot, get into fights and watched movies at the cinema without paying for the tickets. And although he was good in Arabic language (he enjoyed learning the system of Arabic poetry and memorizing Arabic poems, and Arabic syllogisms), he used his knowledge to read romantic novels at the public library of Zainuddin Lebai al-Yunusiyyah. This, however, was not to his father's liking. He was once caught by his father in this activity and

⁵⁴Ibid., 18.

⁵⁵For information on Islamic education in Sumatra, see Mahmud Yunus, *Sejarah Pendidikan Islam di Sumatera*, [History of Islamic Education in Sumatera], (Jakarta: Hidakarya Agung, 1985). See also Karel Steenbrink, "Hamka (1908-1981) and the Integration of the Islamic Ummah of Indonesia", *Studia Islamika*, Vol.1, No. 3, 1994, 119-147, 129.

⁵⁶*Sumatera Ṭawālib* grew out of *Surau Jambatan Besi*, a traditional madrasah (a place for prayer, smaller than a masjid, which is also used as a school for teaching religious sciences) which belonged to Sheikh Abdul Karim. *Sumatera Ṭawālib* was a reformist school. It was the result of the Sheikh's inspiration by Kiyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan, the founding father of the Muhammadiyah. See also Mahmud Yunus, *Sejarah Pendidikan Islam di Sumatera*, 75.

⁵⁷*Ayahku*, 58.

frowned upon with the comment, "are you going to be an 'ālim or a story teller?"⁵⁸ By putting Hamka in the *Sumatera Tawālib*, the Shaykh's own school, the latter hoped to oversee his son's movements and educational progress. Hamka unfortunately was miserable at *Sumatera Tawālib*. He even absented himself from school for fifteen days consecutively and received a big slap from his father after the latter received a report from the teacher.⁵⁹ According to Hamka, although *Sumatera Tawālib* was supposed to be a modern school, in reality it still followed the old system which relied on students's memorization of heavy classical texts meant for older students. Student's ages ranged from ten to thirty years old. Some students could not even write, though they could read due to years of familiarity, and could understand the discussions, while others especially the young ones were totally lost.⁶⁰

According to Hamka, his being naughty was due to his strict and rigid upbringing and the high expectations of his father, Shaykh Abdul Karim. Shaykh Abdul Karim also sometimes contradicted himself in what he taught. Although he taught that one should help the poor and unfortunate, there were several cases where young Hamka was scolded for exercising this Islamic duty; for example, helping a blind man to get around the market place. This incident was reported to his father and Hamka was scolded for giving his father shame; a son of an important 'ālim should not be seen holding a blind man's hand.⁶¹

Young Hamka's situation worsened when his mother was divorced when he was only twelve. Shaykh Abdul Karim, though a great 'ālim and a pioneer in radical reformist thought, was unable to break free from the *adat* which dictated the relations between family members. His polygynous marriages, a result of being sought after as a

⁵⁸Ibid., 63.

⁵⁹Hamka, *Kenang-kenangan Hidup*, 32.

⁶⁰Ibid., 30.

⁶¹Ibid., 23.

potential son-in-law, and his responsibilities toward his maternal nieces and nephews, in addition to a quarrel that took place between his clan and his wife's, took a toll on his marriage to Hamka's mother. Hamka wrote in his autobiography,

Marriage in our country [i.e., according to the *adat*] is not just a relationship between the two people but more so between the two clans. Even though you love your wife, you cannot hold fast to that. What is important is whether your family, your uncles and chiefs of your clan like the woman. When you got married it was based on their permission . . .

If you have more than one wife, in our country, there is something you have to know. The wife whom you love will be disliked by your family. The wife whom you love less will have the support of your family.⁶²

After his parents' divorce, Hamka was very much neglected and left to his own devices. His relationship with his father soured. Since children are considered their mother's, the dislike of some of his father's clan members toward his mother transferred to him. He began joining those who gambled and participated in cock-fighting. He injured a colleague with a knife and he, himself was injured while practicing martial arts in a daring challenge. His father was worried and sent him to another religious school, in Prabek, when he was fourteen. There he did not learn anything but engrossed himself with harmless mischief. Most of the time he followed the traditional storytellers who travelled around the country singing their stories to the accompaniment of the *rebab* (a traditional stringed instrument). After a few months, he returned to his village and decided to study the *adat* properly. This made his maternal uncles happy (since they were *ahli adat*) and his father angry. He completed his learning on the *adat* and after completing the necessary rituals was given the title *Datuk Indomo* at the age of fifteen. He must have been very unhappy, for he "ran away" to Java by himself, but was sent

⁶²Ibid., 34.

home because he contracted smallpox.⁶³ At sixteen he went to Java again, this time with his father's permission to start his self-education with many of those whose name has been inscribed in the history of Indonesia today as the early proponents of modern Islamic movements. Some of them are Haji Omar Said Cokroaminoto, a *priyayi* (Javanese noble), with whom he studied Islam and socialism, R. M. Suryopranoto with whom he studied sociology, and Ki Bagus Hadikusumo with whom he studied *tafsīr*, H. Fakhruddin of the Muhammadiyah⁶⁴ movement, and Sutan Mansur his brother-in-law and his spiritual guide who was also one of the leaders of the Muhammadiyah.⁶⁵

After a year in Java, he returned to his homeland to help his father open a Muhammadiyah branch in Padang Panjang. By then he had become an able orator and founded an oratory club to train his friends in order to be able to give public speeches on behalf of the Muhammadiyah movement. The speeches were published in his first publication *Khāṭib al-Ummah*, the first Muhammadiyah journal, but for three series only.⁶⁶

In 1927, due to personal criticisms by his father and friends concerning his education and knowledge, he "ran away" to Mecca and while there was exposed to Arabic and more Islamic literature when working at a printing press to support himself. After a year, he returned as a *Haji* and the rift between him and his father was mended. His knowledge was "trusted" and he was looked upon as an able heir of his father.⁶⁷

⁶³See *ibid.*, 36-47.

⁶⁴The Muhammadiyah movement was founded in 1912 by Kiyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan in Jogjakarta. This is an Islamic reformist modernist movement following the teachings of Muhammad Abduh/Muhammad Rashid Rida in Egypt.

See Harry J. Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun*, (Holland/USA: Foris Publications, 1983) 47. See also Hamka, *Pengaruh Muhammad 'Abduh di Indonesia* [The Influence of Muhammad 'Abduh in Indonesia], (Jakarta: Tintamas, 1961) 37.

⁶⁵See Hamka, *Kenang-Kenangan Hidup*, 53-55.

⁶⁶Taufik Abdullah, "Hamka", *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, ed. J. L. Esposito, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) Vol. 2, 96-97 [henceforth cited as *OEMIW*]

⁶⁷Hamka, *Kenang-kenangan Hidup*, 87.

His return from *Hajj* and his engagement to a girl his father had chosen in 1927 caused him to consider how to support himself and a family. Thus, he started writing his first novel *Si Sabariah* which was based on a true story, in Minangkabau dialect, adopting the name Hamka for the first time. The book was published in 1928. The proceeds from the sale of this book were used for his marriage ceremony and feast in 1929.

His marriage to Siti Raham binti Endah Sutan was a happy one. They had ten children of whom two died during childhood. Siti Raham, was a woman who lived up to her name (which means 'womb'); she was a very nurturing woman. She endured poverty, a boycott upon her husband when people thought that he was working for the Japanese⁶⁸, the "Biggest Literary Scandal" in 1963 when he was accused of plagiarism by the proponents of *Partai Komunis Indonesia* (Indonesian Communist Party) with regard to his novelette *Tenggelamnya Kapal van der Wijck*,⁶⁹ and Hamka's incarceration by Sukarno from 1964-1966 as a result of being falsely accused of being a traitor to the country.⁷⁰ The marriage lasted for forty-three years until Siti Raham died in 1972 at the age of 58 after some complications as a result of diabetes and hypertension.⁷¹

His Contribution

It was from 1927 that he became known as Hamka.⁷² Long before the Japanese occupation of Indonesia, he was already a successful writer and a professional publisher.⁷³ He became known as the most prolific of modern Indonesian Islamic

⁶⁸Ibid., 311-336.

⁶⁹For a detailed discussion of the alleged plagiarism, see Yunus Amir Hamzah, *Tenggelamnya Kapal van der Wijck dalam Polemik*, (Jakarta: Megabookstore, 1963). See also A. Teeuw, "Hamka di-Nilai Samula", *Dewan Bahasa* 10 (May 1966): 196-203.

⁷⁰See *TAZ*, Vol. 1, 50.

⁷¹See Rusydi Hamka, *Pribadi dan Martabat Buya Prof. Dr. Hamka*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1983) 33.

⁷²Taufik Abdullah, "Hamka", in *OEMIW*, 96.

⁷³James Rush, "Hamka dan Indonesia Moderen", 43.

writers, with more than a hundred books to his name, some of which were collections of articles from journals that he regularly wrote for, all of which together with his novels have Islamic themes.⁷⁴ By the end of the 1930's Hamka's books could be found in the libraries of public schools, and students were encouraged by their teachers to read them.⁷⁵ According to Boland, Mukti Ali, later the Minister of the Department of Religion, "refers to Hamka's books for 'personal piety'"⁷⁶, which according to Boland "may indeed be taken as samples of modern Muslim piety".⁷⁷ Those who write about him agree that Hamka was a man of literature who saw literary activity as an instrument for Islamic instruction or "*alat dakwah*".⁷⁸ According to Von der Mehden, in Malaysia, around 1963 to 1964, "there was little writing by contemporary foreign authors on Islam available in the bookshops other than that by Indonesian scholars, particularly Hamka".⁷⁹ His writings covered a wide range of topics which include literature, politics, philosophy, ethics, biography and history, Minangkabau *adat* and *taṣawwuf* (Islamic mysticism).⁸⁰ It has also been said that being a keen student of history he was able to "make long-forgotten past alive"⁸¹ and he "never failed to find moral messages

⁷⁴Marwan Saridjo, "Mengerling Hamka lewat Roman-romannya", *Kenang-kenangan 70 tahun Buya Hamka*, (Jakarta, 1978) 207

⁷⁵James Rush, "Hamka dan Indonesia Moderen", 44.

⁷⁶B. J. Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia*, 216.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸M. Dawam Rahardjo, "Agama dalam Masyarakat Modern: Pandangan Hamka sebagai Ulama dan Pujangga", *Intelektual Inteligensia dan Perilaku Politik Bangsa-- Risalah Cendekiawan Muslim*, (Jakarta: Penerbit Mizan, 1993) 199.

⁷⁹Fred R. von der Mehden, *The Worlds of Islam*, (Gainsville: University Press of Florida, 1993) 85.

⁸⁰According to Umminda, the publisher of Hamka's *Ayahku: Riwayat Hidup Dr. H. Abdul Karim Amrullah dan Perjuangan Kaum Agama di Sumatra*, (Jakarta: Umminda, 1982) 3rd. ed., 4th reprint preface, Harry J. Benda translated a number of sections from chapter 8 of the said book for his *Indonesian Writing in Translation*, and Nakamura translated *Ayahku* into Japanese. In addition, says Umminda, Deliar Noer, Taufik Abdullah and several other academicians referred a great deal to this book. Taufik Abdullah himself professed that Hamka's sources are reliable; Taufik Abdullah, "Masa awal Muhammadiyah di Minangkabau: Cuplikan dari Arsip Belanda" in Panitia Peringatan Buku, *Kenang-Kenangan 70 Tahun Buya Hamka*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1983) 131-134.

⁸¹Taufik Abdullah, "Hamka", in *OEMIW*, 97.

that history held for the present".⁸² One cannot fail to notice that his novels too are filled with historical references.

Without doubt, his *adat* upbringing which imparted its tradition through oral tradition and performances, in stories, songs and poetry, with its artistic arrangement of words and idioms, emphasising the beauty of language, in addition to his religious upbringing based on a lot of reading and memorising, combined to make him a popular writer. He was a storyteller *par excellence*. Even in his religious works and *tafsīr*, he never forgets to put in the proverbs and words of wisdom of old.

Due to the hardships he suffered as a student, he appreciated knowledge and developed the ability to deliver his message in a simple but attractive manner. His ability to teach facilitated his career as a *muballigh* (propagator of Islam) for the Muhammadiyah. He became a good and respectable *muballigh* and an 'ālim who also became the leading Imam of Masjid Agung al-Azhar in Jakarta for thirty years.⁸³

"Prominence"

Other than his native tongue, Malay, the only foreign language he knew was Arabic, through which he read the translated works of ancient and modern western writers.⁸⁴ Yet, he managed to become a "prominent 'ālim" compared to many who had better qualifications than he. By "prominent 'ālim", we mean that as his writings suggests, he had a comprehensive understanding of Islam, not just the technicalities of *fiqh*. Without doubt this is the result of his emphasis or "specialization" in the 'aqā'id or principles of

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³James Rush, "Hamka dan Indonesia Modern", 45.

⁸⁴S. I. Poeradisastra, "Dalam Karya Sastra pun Berdakwah dan Berkhotbah", *Kenang-kenangan 70 tahun Buya Hamka*, 123.

religion.⁸⁵ If anyone claims that Hamka's writing is not original, it is precisely because of this. However, his delivery was original. The themes of his writings are the application and inculcation of Islamic reformist ideas, as developed by Muḥammad 'Abduh and other reformists.⁸⁶ What is more important and clear from his writings is that he was able to contextualise Islam in Indonesia particularly, and the Malay world in general, using the ideas of the reformists, making the ideals of Islam functional and purposive.⁸⁷ This was his original contribution, which not many scholars have been able to achieve.

Another reason that made Hamka a prominent *'ālim* is that his presence was felt by a wide variety of people. He was often invited to visit by other countries, as a leader of the Muḥammadiyah, as a delegate of the Indonesian government for religious affairs, or as a scholar (usually invited by the Malay sultans from neighbouring areas in Sumatra as well as Malaysia).⁸⁸ His activities as a religious teacher *cum muballigh*, a propagator, and a leader, of the Muhammadiyah movement enabled him to travel a great deal to the urban and rural provinces of Indonesia, making him close and personally known to the masses. This richness of experience usually resulted in novels and journalistic writings. Through these writings he successfully and fluently articulated and spread his religious ideas in the Malay world, while the views of other scholars who might be better were hindered from spreading for not using interesting measures as his.

⁸⁵M. Dawam Rahardjo, "Agama dalam Masyarakat Modern: Pandangan Hamka sebagai Ulama dan Pujangga", *Intelektual Inteligensia dan Perilaku Politik Bangsa-- Risalah Cendekiawan Muslim*, (Jakarta: Penerbit Mizan, 1993) 200.

⁸⁶See Ibid., 200-201. See also James Rush, 45.

⁸⁷See Wan Sabri Wan Yusof, "Hamka's Tafsir al-Azhar: Qur'anic Exegesis as a Mirror of Social Change" (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis: Temple University, 1997) v.

⁸⁸He visited the Middle East in 1950 and performed Hajj while he was there; his expenses were paid by the publisher, Gapura. From this visit, he wrote *Mandi Cahaya di Tanah Suci* [In the Light of the Holy Land], *Di Lembah Sungai Nil* [In the Valley of the Nile], and *Di Tepi Sungai Dajlah* (By the Euphrates), all published by Gapura. In 1952, he was invited by the US State Department to visit the United States and stayed there for four months. From this visit he wrote *Empat Bulan Di Amerika* [Four Months in America]. See Rusydi Hamka, *Pribadi dan Martabat Buya Prof. Dr. Hamka*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1983) 5.

His interests spanned far beyond traditional religious issues. He contributed much in handling contemporary socio-religious issues, as may be found in his popular question and answer column in the Muslim magazines he founded, *Gema Islam* and *Panji Masyarakat*.⁸⁹ He was not an "armchair scholar", but an active public figure, and as we have noted, one whose presence was felt.⁹⁰ He could be read; in the beginning, his religious ideas came through his romantic novelettes,⁹¹ later through non-fictional works,⁹² and in articles for magazines and newspapers, because he acted and reacted towards the environment around him. He could be seen at peoples' functions, at the religious classes organized by Muhammadiyah, the mosques⁹³, at national and international religious functions. In 1950 when he was appointed as a high ranking officer at the Department of Religion, one of his responsibilities was to teach at several institutions of higher learning as a visiting lecturer, near as well as far from Jakarta.⁹⁴ Thus, he was seen within the intellectual world as well. In the 1960's and 1970's he

⁸⁹Excerpts/selections from the question and answer columns were published in book form by his children. See Rusydi and Afif Hamka (eds.), *Hamka Membahas Soal-Soal Islam*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1983). The book contains 456 pages dealing with 85 selected questions. The questions range from religious issues which in themselves have many branches such as 'aqidah, fiqh and tasawwuf, to parochial and present day discussions on such as issues as Islamization vs. Christianization in Indonesia, Darwin's theory, communism, women's leadership, education, issues in Minangkabau adat, inter-religious issues, etc.

⁹⁰James Rush, "Hamka dan Indonesia Modern", 44.

⁹¹Some of his famous novelettes are *Di bawah Lindungan Ka'abah* (1937), *Tenggelamnya Kapal van Der Wijck* (1937), *Merantau ke Deli* (1940), *Dijemput Mamaknya* (1939), and *Terusir [Kerana Fitnah]* (1940).

⁹²To name just a few, *Adat Minangkabau dan Agama Islam* (1929), *Pedoman Muballigh Islam* (1937), *Tasawwuf Modern* (1939), *Agama dan Perempuan* (1939), *Revolusi Fikiran* (1946), *Merdeka* (1946), *Perkembangan Tasauf dari Abad ke Abad* (1952), *Hak-Hak Asasi Manusia dari Segi Islam* (1968). Most of his books went through multiple reprints including the novelettes. A few were printed for the 14th and 16th times.

⁹³He never refused invitations from small villages all over Indonesia, according to his son Rusydi Hamka, See Rusydi Hamka, *Pribadi dan Martabat Buya Prof. Dr. Hamka*, 105.

⁹⁴He taught at Perguruan Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri, Jogjakarta; Universitas Islam Jakarta; Universitas Muslim Indonesia, Makassar; Fakultas Hukum dan Falsafah Muhammadiyah, Padang Panjang; Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara. See Rusydi Hamka, *Pribadi dan Martabat Buya Prof. Dr. Hamka*, 4-5.

could be seen on television as well, in Indonesia and Malaysia⁹⁵, and he could also be heard on the radio untiringly speaking on religious, moral, and social issues.⁹⁶

During the Japanese occupation (1942-1945), when he was living in Medan, Hamka worked rather closely with the Japanese as a religious advisor. He was also appointed by the Japanese as a member of the district representative council for Medan, because of which by the end of Japanese occupation, some people misconstrued his actions and thought him a collaborator. He was not ashamed to say later that during that time, he had made some mistakes, for example, at a time when most people could not find rice and were suffering from hunger, he had held a feast. He also admitted that the position of power and the perks the Japanese gave him sometimes "went to his head". He was even coveting for higher post. But he and his friends' real intention which was blurred sometimes, was to secure the promise of independence from the Japanese for Indonesia. The Japanese did promise independence, but only to deceive the Indonesians to obtain their help for the war effort. Because of Hamka's involvement with the Japanese, he became alienated from the people. Fortunately, he realized his mistake quickly and reverted to doing the right thing although he had to suffer a lot from this alienation and boycott.⁹⁷

During the revolution for independence against the Dutch from 1945 to 1949 when the latter decided to reoccupy Indonesia after the defeat of the Japanese, Hamka moved from Medan to Sungai Batang, and became actively involved with the guerrilla movement, in comforting and boosting the morale of the people in the remote

⁹⁵He also appeared in an interview on BBC on Dec. 8, 1968 during his visit to London and was invited by the Malaysian Hall and Wisma Indonesia to give talks. He was also invited by Islamic Cultural Centre to deliver Friday sermon to an international Muslim congregation. See Aoh K. Hadimadja, "Hamka di London", *Kenang-kenangan 70 tahun Buya Hamka*, 226-227.

⁹⁶See Nasir Tamara, Buntaran Sanusi and Vincent Djauhari (eds.), *Hamka di Mata Hati Umat* (Hamka in the Eyes of the People), (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1983) on the various comments made by people from all walks of life about Hamka.

⁹⁷For detailed information, see Hamka, *Kenang-Kenangan Hidup*, 218-311. See also James Rush, *Hamka dan Indonesia Modern*, 43.

countryside and in their hiding places in the jungle. When the revolution was over he moved to Jakarta and resumed his career as a writer, publisher and *muballigh*, and before long, became involved in politics. He was a member of the Islamic party, Masyumi, and won a seat at the 1955 Indonesian General Election to become a member of parliament until 1959. He was not ready to become a politician but prepared himself only as a vote getter for Masyumi.⁹⁸

In 1959, in honour of his contributions in the Islamic field, especially *da'wah*, he was given an honorary doctorate degree by Al-Azhar University, Egypt. In 1974, he was bestowed another by University Kebangsaan Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, for his contribution to Malay literature. In 1975, due to his popularity as an *'ālim*, Hamka was appointed leader of the Indonesian Majelis Ulama (Ulama Assembly) to advise the Indonesian government and to act as the mediator between the people and the government. In 1980 an election was held for a new leader of the Majelis. Hamka was elected again but was not keen to accept because he found that being a mediator between people and the government had its problems; as he put it, it was like being a "*kue bika* (a traditional Malay cake cooked between two fires--heating the top and bottom in a special oven)".⁹⁹ In May 1981, Hamka resigned from the post due to ill health but mostly because of the controversy as a result of a *fatwā* (legal judgement) in which he proclaimed, that it is forbidden for Muslims to attend Christmas rituals celebrating the birth of Jesus. When he learned that the Minister of Religion was angry and wanted to resign, Hamka quickly offered his own resignation as leader of the *Majelis Ulama*. Although he was asked to retract his *fatwā*, he never did. However, official circulation was made to inform the public that the *fatwā* was retracted even

⁹⁸Rusydi Hamka, *Pribadi dan Martabat Buya Prof. Dr. Hamka*, 5. See also Karel Steenbrink, "Hamka (1908-1981) and the Integration of the Islamic Ummah of Indonesia", *Studia Islamika*, Vol.1, No. 3, 1994, 119-147, 138.

⁹⁹Rusydi Hamka, *Pribadi dan Martabat Buya Prof. Dr. Hamka*, 205.

though it was valid.¹⁰⁰ Two months after resigning, Hamka died, on Friday, July 24, 1981, at the age of 73 years and 5 months.

An Important Influence on Hamka: His Forefathers

While others have written that it was the intellectual, social and political environment that influenced Hamka's intellectual and psychological development, the present writer feels that Hamka's knowledge of his "roots" also had an important influence upon him. This can be ascertained from reading *Ayahku (My Father)*¹⁰¹. Hamka describes in detail there his descent from four generations of a great and much respected ulama family of Minangkabau, West Sumatera. When reading *Ayahku*, one can detect Hamka's pride in his ancestors and how deeply influenced he was by their legacy. At a glance, it looks like Hamka was saying that the family tradition did not end with his father but continues with him. Thus, some account of his forefathers is relevant.

His Forefathers

Hamka's great-great-grandfather, Abdullah Arif, known as Tuanku¹⁰² Pariaman was one of the leaders of the *Perang Paderi* (Padri War) which started in April 1821 against Dutch encroachment into Minangkabau. Tuanku Pariaman was charged with protecting

¹⁰⁰For detail on the incidents during Hamka's tenure as *Ketua Umum Majelis Ugama* see Rusydi Hamka, *Pribadi dan Martabat Buya Prof. Dr. Hamka*, 189-221. Karel Steenbrink mentions the *fatwa* incident in, "Hamka (1908-1981) and the Integration of the Islamic Ummah of Indonesia", *Studia Islamika*, 141.

¹⁰¹Hamka, *Ayahku: Riwayat Hidup Dr. Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah dan Perjuangan Kaum Agama di Sumatera* [My Father: Biography of Dr. Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah and the Struggle of the Religious Group in Sumatra], (Jakarta: Jayamurni, 1957, 2nd ed.). The work hints subtly that in the writer's own blood runs the spirit of *jihad* of his great-great-grandfather, Tuanku Pariaman, the sense of propriety and eloquence of his great-grandfather, Tuanku Guguk Katur, the mysticism of his grandfather, Sheikh Amrullah, and the intellectuality and courage of his father, who was not afraid to stand up for his convictions.

¹⁰²Tuanku is an honorary title for a grand ulama. Tuanku Pariaman means "our master from Pariaman". Pariaman is the name of a place. The title is given by the ulama and *ahli adat* (religious and traditional customary authority). On bestowing the title a few cattle were slaughtered in celebration of a great feast. See Hamka, *Ayahku*, (Jakarta: Jayamurni, 1967) 43, 45.

Andalas and its territories by Tuanku Imam Bonjol, the last leader of *Perang Padri* and its highest Commander. The long struggle (*jihād*) that followed (until 1837), led by the ulama, was lost with many of them becoming martyrs for lack of weaponry and military capability, in addition to treachery by a few followers of the Padri group. The last bastion in Minangkabau was Bonjol. Bonjol was attacked twice, first in 1832, and next in August 1837 after Tuanku Imam Bonjol recovered new strength. With the fall of Bonjol this time, Tuanku Imam Bonjol was exiled. Tuanku Pariaman himself was caught and imprisoned earlier in 1832. He was later released and made to promise that he would not fight against the Dutch again.¹⁰³ Since he was old, he kept his promise and resumed his normal life as an Islamic teacher to the Minangkabau masses until his death.¹⁰⁴

Perang Padri and Tuanku Imam Bonjol brings us to discuss the Padri Movement briefly. The origin of the Padri Movement has been attributed to three famous *hajis* who returned from Mecca in 1802: Haji Miskin (returned to Pandai Sikat), Haji Abdul Rahman (returned to Piabang), and Haji Muhammad Arif (returned to Sumanik). It has been said that the three hajis were influenced by the Wahhābī movement which had just conquered the Hejaz. When they returned to their respective places they found supporters among like-minded ulama for the transformation of the Minangkabau society which they considered unIslamic (due to the religious innovation widespread at the time) to a fully Islamic one. Tuanku Pariaman, of course, was one of the proponents of the new reformist movement. The movement gained a certain amount of success, and was considered a true religious reform,¹⁰⁵ but due to the harshness of its

¹⁰³For more detailed information on the role of Tuanku Pariaman and Tuanku Imam Bonjol in *Perang Padri*, see Hamka, *Ayahku* (4th. edition), (Jakarta: Umminda, 1982) 18- 32.

¹⁰⁴Hamka, *Ayahku*, 32.

¹⁰⁵This movement sought to rid the Minangkabau people of their irreligious practices such as building graves and tombs for those considered saints, eradicating superstitious beliefs, gambling, drinking alcoholic drinks, cock and bull fighting and many others. In their zealotry, however, they even

design, it invited rebellion on the part of the *adat* nobles who called upon the Dutch to intervene and thereby gave the latter the opportunity to invade and occupy Minangkabau. Thus, Perang Padri was a war to resist both the unIslamic elements within the Minangkabau society and foreign domination.

Tuanku Pariaman had a student, Abdullah Salleh, whom he favoured a great deal and gave his daughter, Siti Saerah in marriage, prizing his learning and religious practice and good manners--for these are the principal qualities that religious people looked for in a son-in-law. The young man was also a respectable sufi of the Naqshbandi tariqah. Abdullah Salleh was later to be known as Tuanku Guguk Katur, a great *'ālim* and *ahli adat* (one who is an expert on Minangkabau traditional custom).

Through Tuanku Guguk Katur and Siti Saerah came Muhammad Amrullah, born in 1838. He studied with his grandfather Tuanku Pariaman and was given the title Fakih Kisā'ī. He was given the *ijāzah* (permission) to teach *tafsīr*, *fiqh*, *taṣawwuf*, and all the branches of the sciences of Arabic language by his grandfather. He was 26 years old by that time. Many students came to study with him. After he had become famous, he felt that his knowledge was inadequate and went to Mecca to further his studies. As was the custom with the ulama at that time he took an *ijāzah* of the Naqshbandi tariqah and became a sheikh of that order. He became known as a great *'ālim* such that the *ahli ugama* (the ulama) and the *ahli adat* gave him the honorary title Tuanku Kisā'ī. People considered him "*keramat*" or a very holy man because all of his prayers (*du'ā'*) were said to come true. Because of that, the villagers and common people showed him extreme respect and honour-- "amounting to *shirk*"¹⁰⁶, says Hamka. For example, when

forbade the chewing of betel nut which was an important ceremony in Malay custom. They made rules that every household must have a slab of stone to wash the feet on it for prayer in the front yard and of course, all women must cover their hair, even old women. There are several other rules. Anyone who neglected these rules can be put to death. In fact, one of the leaders of this movement, Tuanku Nan Renceh did put his aunt to death for failing to follow the rules properly. See *ibid.*, 14-17.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

somebody is ill, his family would get the water which Tuanku Kisā'ī had used to wash his feet for ablution (*wuḍū'*) and sprinkle it on the sick person or even give it to him to drink. After the Tuanku ate his food at a feast, his left-overs were sought after by people for blessing (*barakah*). When he died, the water with which his body was washed was taken by the people for *barakah* and medicine.¹⁰⁷ Therefore it is not surprising to learn that his famous son, Muhammad Rasul *alias* Sheikh Abdul Karim Amrullah, criticized the practices of his father, and his condoning the ignorant masses in committing *shirk*.

Tuanku Kisā'ī had many children, in all forty-six from eight wives,¹⁰⁸ though he never had more than four wives at any one time. It should be noted that at that time, polygyny was common among the Minangkabau people. According to Hamka, this was due to the fact that in the matrilineal Minangkabau custom, a husband was not responsible for the maintenance of his wife and children. They were the responsibility of the wife's uncles. Moreover, a man of status such as an *ālim*, a rich businessman or a high ranking man in society would be much sought after in marriage by the women's side which really meant that he was paid by the bride's side to father her children. A husband, in Minangkabau custom was no more than a guest at his wife's house. He was called *orang semenda* (related by marriage, "in-law").¹⁰⁹ Without the responsibility to provide for their wives and children, Minangkabau men felt free to marry as they pleased. Polygyny was much more common among the ulama than among ordinary folk. Having a son-in-law from ulama circles was most prestigious, even though the *ālim* concerned was already married, or even worse, was at risk of divorcing one of his

¹⁰⁷Ibid 47-50.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 50-51.

¹⁰⁹TAZ, Vol. 2, 1074-1075.

wives in order to accommodate another for whom he was paid.¹¹⁰ In the case of Tuanku Kisā'ī, he was "invited" (*dijemput*)-- sought in marriage— even by far away clans with which it was not the custom of his clan to marry.¹¹¹

Among Tuanku Kisā'ī's sons was Muhammad Rasul later to be known as Sheikh Abdul Karim Amrullah.¹¹² He was to become an important *‘ālim* who contributed a great deal to the history of Indonesian independence from Dutch and Japanese colonial rule. Muhammad Rasul was born in February, 1879 and raised with strict Islamic discipline. After studying with his father, he was sent to Mecca at the age of sixteen to further his studies. From childhood, Muhammad Rasul had shown, his son says, a distinct character that differentiated him from other students of that time, in that he did not like just to listen to his teacher, but preferred to ask questions and when necessary disagree with him. In this, he can be considered ahead of his time because such behaviour was considered forbidden in traditional circles and is so even to this day, although not as strictly. Even so, his teacher Shaykh Ahmad Khatib loved him for his intelligence, although often hurt by the questioning and argument in front of others.¹¹³ Muhammad Rasul studied for seven years with Sheikh Ahmad Khatib from 1894-1901. It is evident from Hamka's writing about his father that the influence of Sheikh Ahmad Khatib was significant.

According to Abdul Karim, Sheikh Ahmad Khatib was a son of Minangkabau who had been disappointed by the state of Islam in his homeland. He became the son-in-law of a rich Meccan nobleman (Kurdish by origin), Hamid Kurdi, and through him

¹¹⁰According to Hamka, in contrast to the above, after World War 2, polygynous marriage as a custom of the Minangkabau people was dying. An uncle no longer built a special house (*rumah gadang*) for his nieces. Nowadays, a husband built a house for himself and his family, wife and children, and he was responsible for their well being. The financial and emotional pressure of carrying the responsibility of maintaining one's own family caused polygynous marriage to dwindle. See *TAZ*, Vol.2, 1074-1075.

¹¹¹Hamka, *Ayahku*, 50-51.

¹¹²It was customary at that time to change one's name after performing Hajj to signify entering a new life. *Ibid.*, 47.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, 56.

was acquainted with the Sharif of Mecca, who appointed him Imam of the Shāfi'i school and a *khātib* (preacher) in the Masjid al-Haram, due to his excellence in the knowledge of the religious sciences.¹¹⁴ He gained the respect of the ulama of both Mecca and Indonesia. He was vehemently against all religious innovation and stood for the purification of Islamic doctrine and practice, much of which was inherited by Haji Rasul.

When Haji Rasul, now Abdul Karim Amrullah, returned to Minangkabau in 1901 at the age of twenty-three, he set about criticising many aspects of religious practice of his people, at first the excesses associated with the practices of the *ṭarīqah* of which his father was the Shaykh, which he felt were without basis in the Qur'ān or Sunnah. His father arranged his marriage to settle his zeal and within a few years he was asked to take his brothers to Mecca for studies. There he was given permission, by Shaykh Ahmad Khatib to teach at the Masjid al-Ḥarām. Unfortunately, after a few years his newborn son and wife died and he returned to Minangkabau.

From then onward, his teachings changed direction.¹¹⁵ He not only criticized the religious practices of his people but started spreading new ideas among his students, becoming a pioneer of a new movement around 1906 which became known as "*kaum muda*" (the young group), in contradistinction to the opposing trend, "*kaum tua*" (the traditionalist).¹¹⁶ The Muslim community became bitterly divided.

What sparked off the *kaum muda/kaum tua* debate was the Naqshbandiyah belief and practice of *rābiṭah*, which holds that the founding Shaykh of the *ṭarīqah* is

¹¹⁴Ibid., 60-61. See also William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967) 60 and Hamka, *TAZ*, Vol. 2, 1162-1163.

¹¹⁵Hamka, *Ayahku*, 65.

¹¹⁶Kaum Muda -- followers of Islamic revivalism whose teaching is the purification of Islamic doctrine and practice according to the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Kaum Tua-- those following the old school seen as representing religious inertia and medieval accretions mixed with local pre-Islamic custom. See Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun*, 46; and Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, Chapter 3, "Kaum Muda/Kaum Tua: Innovation and Reaction", 56-90.

truly present at the beginning of *zikr* (incantation or prayer). Later, other issues came about, for example, visiting the graves of *keramat* (holy persons), reading Qur'ān to them, bringing gifts and asking for favours from the grave. These were considered *khurāfāt* (superstitions and religious excesses) by the *kaum muda* and against the fundamental principle of Islam, *tawhīd* (doctrine of unity), in which only to God can one ask and pray. Other disputes involved a number of *khilāfīyyah* (controversial or disputed) problems which today may seem rather trivial, for example whether the formulation of the intention for prayer (Ind. *lafaz niat*) made during the first *takbīr* (the exclamation of *Allāhu akbar*) is Sunnah or *bid'ah*, the same question being asked about saying *du'ā qunūt* in *ṣubḥ* (dawn) prayer. Sheikh Abdul Karim debated energetically and harshly against these practices. He was an uncompromising man. In his public lectures, he would criticize severely all practices which in his view were against Islamic teachings. His approach says Noer, "was harsh, unforgiving and unrelenting".¹¹⁷ Hamka lists about seventeen items altogether that caused great debate and turmoil in the lives of people at the time.¹¹⁸ What needs to be made clear however, is that Shaykh Abdul Karim's emphasis was not on the trivial issues as such but rather on the issue of *'aqīdah*, the fundamental issue of *tawhīd*. For example, he was against the teaching in the Naqshbandi tariqah which taught the notion of *wasīlah* or the shaykh as the intermediary between God and his servant, and other methods of the tariqah which did not have any sanction from the Qur'ān and Sunnah.¹¹⁹ It may sound ironic, but Shaykh Abdul Karim was also a shaykh of the Naqshbandi tariqah, though his sufi practice was based on the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. That is to say, like most reformists he found

¹¹⁷Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia 1900-1942*, (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1973) 36.

¹¹⁸Hamka, *Ayahku*, 75.

¹¹⁹ Apparently, the notion of *wasīlah* and *rābiṭah* were widespread practices in many *ṭarīqahs* including the Naqshbandi *ṭarīqah* in the Malay world during this time. See Mustafa Zahri, *Kunci Memahami Ilmu Tasawwuf* [The Key to Understanding Mysticism], (Surabaya: Pt. Bina Ilmu, 1979) 64.

interpretation and the practice of sufism based on the Qur'ān and Sunnah. It was because of this, that debates were held between *kaum muda* and *kaum tua* groups so that each idea was presented clearly.¹²⁰

There were many traditions the Shaykh tried to change. One of his initiatives was to revitalize and reform the teaching of *'ilm al-tawhīd* or *uṣūl al-dīn*. *'Ilm al-tawhīd* which used to be memorized though not necessarily understood, became understood and its implications on daily practices became clear. The content of his teaching on this subject was compiled in a small book in Malay though the title is in Arabic as *'Umdat al-Anām fī 'Ilm al-Kalām* (Firm Stand in 'Ilm al-Kalām).¹²¹ Such was only the beginning of the second Islamic reform in Minangkabau which was later continued and strengthened by the influence of the teachings of Afghani and 'Abduh. It was during this second period that Abdul Malik, our Hamka, was born and grew up. Therefore it is not surprising that Hamka would turn out to be an Islamic reformist himself.

The influence of Afghani and 'Abduh were already felt by 1905 in Java through the journals *al-'Urwat al-Wuthqā* and *al-Manār*. In 1912, Kiyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan founded the Muhammadiyah movement based on the teachings of *al-Manār*'s proponents. Shaykh Abdul Karim had visited Kiyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan, with whom he was greatly impressed, for the first time in 1917 and founded the *Sumatera Ṭawālīb* after his return to Minangkabau. In 1925, after Shaykh Abdul Karim's return from Java for the second time, he founded a Muhammadiyah branch in Minangkabau, in Padang Panjang where both he and his son, Hamka, were active propagators of the movement.

Many important contributions of Shaykh Abdul Karim to the Indonesian people find a place in the history books. For example, he fought against communism in 1920.

¹²⁰ Hamka, *Ayahku* 76-78.

¹²¹ Ibid., 90. Sheikh Abdul Karim was also a writer. He wrote 30 books mostly on religious and *adat* polemics. See *ibid.*, 259.

In 1928, he uncompromisingly and strongly opposed the *Guru-ordonnantie* (teacher ordinance)¹²² as a result of which he was detained in 1941 by the Dutch authorities and exiled in Sukabumi. Our interest, however, is largely in his contributions as an Islamic reformist, as well as the contributions of his ancestors in the same area.

What we feel is revealing about Hamka and his ancestors, at least according to Hamka himself, is their commitment to Islam. They were ulama of great repute. With the exception of Tuanku Guguk Katur, all of them were *mujāhidīn* (those who struggle for a righteous cause) working for political and social changes. We do not deny Hamka's partiality toward his ancestors and his father, particularly in his *Ayahku*, but that partiality is a proof of the influence of his forefathers upon him and his hope to be like them in their religious deeds can be read in that work.

Works on Hamka

There are many works written on Hamka as scholar, poet, journalist, *ālim*, man of literature, preacher, etc. Some of these works are used in this chapter as references. There are many other beside these, for example, K.A. Steenbrink's "Hamka: A Mystical Teacher and Political Leader of the Islam in Indonesia" an unpublished research paper in IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, 1982 and "Quran Interpretations of Hamzah Fansuri (ca 1600) and Hamka (1908-1981): A Comparison" in *Studia Islamika*, no. 2 (1995), 73-95; Gerard Moussay's "Une Grande Figure de l' Islam Indonesian, Buya Hamka" in *Archipel*, no. 32, Vol.1; Fakhry Ali's "Hamka dan Masyarakat Indonesia: Catatan Pendahuluan Riwayat dan Perjuangannya (Hamka and Indonesian Society: A

¹²²Guru Ordinance was the Dutch colonial authorities' regulation for Muslim teachers. This ordinance was issued twice: once in 1905 and again in 1925. In general the ordinance was meant to monitor and regulate influential Muslim teachers. It required religious teachers to have written permission from the Regent or his equivalent. This permission specified the nature of teachings and the regions in which they could be propagated. The Regent and his equivalent would exercise supervision and determine whether the teachers acted in accordance with the license. See Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement*, 175.



Preliminary Survey of His Life and Struggle)" in *Prisma* 12, no. 2 (Feb.1983) 48-40 and Yunus Amirhamzah's *Hamka Sebagai Pengarang Roman* (Hamka as a Novelist), published by Pustaka Sari Indah in Jakarta in 1993.

On *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, Mashitah Ibrahim has written *Manhaj al-Ḥajj 'Abd al-Malik 'Abd al-Karīm Amr Allāh fī Kitābihi Tafsīr al-Azhar* (Hamka's Methodology in His Work, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*), an unpublished Ph.D. thesis at the Department of Islamic Shari'ah of Kulliyyah Dār al-'Ulūm, Cairo University, 1997. This work discusses Hamka's position on issues pertaining to sciences of the Qur'ān, such as, the inimitability of the Qur'an (*i'jāz al-Qur'an*), the abrogation and abrogated (*nāsikh wa al-mansūkh*), Hamka's sources of reference, his rejection of the *Isrā'īliyyāt*¹²³, his disagreement with early 'ulama. Also included, are his positions on the use of reason and the status of women.

Wan Sabri Wan Yusuf has written a Ph.D. thesis at Temple University, 1997, entitled *Hamka's Tafsīr al-Azhar: Qur'ānic Exegesis as a Mirror of Social Change*. As the title suggests, this thesis discusses the socio-political situation of its time, which are reflected in the *tafsīr*. Among the issues discussed in the thesis are inter-Islamic polemics including issues in sufism, inter-religious polemics, social justice in Indonesia, Hamka's idea of religious unity of humankind, and educational reform in all aspects.

Yunan Yusuf has published his Ph.D. thesis as a book titled, *Corak Pemikiran Kalam Tafsir al-Azhar* (Patterns of Theological Thought in Tafsir al-Azhar) in 1990 which proved that Hamka followed a rational theological school of thought. Perhaps it is relevant to briefly mention Hamka's theological thought here.

¹²³ For more information about *Isrā'īliyyāt*, see *Journal of the American Academy of Religion, Thematic Studies*, XLVII (Dec. 1979), article by Gordon D. Newby, "Tafsir Isra'iliyyat", 686-695.

Hamka's Theological Thought

Yunan Yusuf studied eight theological aspects in Tafsīr al-Azhar, namely: a. the position of 'aql (reason), b. the function of *waḥī* (revelation), c. *al-qadā' wa al-qadar* (question pertaining to freewill and predestination), d. the concept of *īmān* (conviction or faith), e. *qudrah* (power) and *irādah* (will) of God, f. Justice of God (*al-'adl*), g. Actions of God (*af'āl Allāh*), and h. Attributes of God (*ṣifāt Allāh*).

From the information gathered, we may conclude that Hamka assigns an important position to reason ('aql). Consequently, he rejects *taqlīd* (blind obedience). He condemns those who follow unquestioningly the way of their ancestors as well as social traditions and customs. For him, *taqlīd* is the enemy of freedom of thought.¹²⁴ On the question concerning the ability of reason as in the discussion of traditional *kalām*, reason, according to Hamka is able to perceive the existence of God, as well as good and evil at the local and temporal level. However, reason cannot perceive its obligation to be grateful to God and to know its obligation to do good and to abandon evil. Although reason is able to perceive the existence of God, it cannot perceive the reality of God. For this, it needs the guidance of *waḥī* (revelation). Hamka gave the example of primitive people who know the existence of God, but wrongly perceiving Him to be a frightening being with horrifying features and a bloodthirsty disposition which they then worship for fear of His wrath. Thus, revelation is important for it informs mankind the truth about God and His attributes, and what reason cannot reach.

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Like all modernist scholars, Hamka followed a rational paradigm of the concept of *al-qadā' wa al-qadar* which he interpreted to mean determination of measure or

¹²⁴ See Yunan Yusuf, *Corak Pemikiran Kalam Tafsir al-Azhar*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1990) 102-106.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 110-111.

potentiality, which in his own words is *hinggaan dan jangkaan* (calculated and estimated).¹²⁶ In this paradigm, humankind is given freedom of will and action, and this assertion is based on the Qur'ānic verses.¹²⁷ Human action is differentiated from the action of God.¹²⁸ Man's freedom of action, however is not absolute because it is limited by *sunnah Allāh* (the law of God) or *taqdīr*.¹²⁹ To illustrate, one may have worked hard on one's *padi* field, for example, expecting high yield. But in one's hard work one must not forget that there is *taqdīr*, that could be in the form of flood or other natural disaster, which, could ruin the crop. In this scheme, *sunnat Allāh* or *taqdīr* helps to inculcate humility in Man to the fact that there is a Power higher than his.¹³⁰ However, since the law of God is immutable, it can be learned so that the next time, one is prepared to protect one's crop, for example, perhaps by building a dam or changing planting schedules according to weather patterns. Hamka concluded that failure is usually the result of negligence in understanding *sunnat Allāh* which is immutable.¹³¹ As for the verses of the Qur'ān which seem to support the idea of predetermination, for example, *Sūrat 2 (al-Baqarah)*: 7, "God has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes is a veil. Great is the penalty they incur", which refers to God's action upon the unbelievers, Hamka interpreted that the reason those mentioned in the verse became unbelievers (Arabic, *kuffār*) is due to their own initial rejection of the message of truth because of pride and stubbornness. Thus, the result is as if God has sealed their hearts

¹²⁶ See Hamka, *Pelajaran Agama Islam*, (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1984) 355.

¹²⁷ For example, see Qur'ān 18:29, Say, "The Truth is from your Lord". Therefore, let him who will, believe, and let him who will, reject it. . . .; and Qur'ān 76: 3, We (God) showed him the way, whether he be grateful or ungrateful rests on his will.

¹²⁸ This is opposed to the traditional school of thought which, in order to save the absolute omnipotence of God, sacrificed the freedom of man's action and considered it the action of God.

¹²⁹ For a detailed concept of *sunnah al-Allāh*, which is related to the theory of cause and effect see Hamka, *Pelajaran Agama Islam*, chapter 8 "Percaya kepada Taqdir, Qadla dan Qadar", 332-355; see also pages 190-195, where he compares the views of al-Ghazzali, ibn Rushd, ibn Sina, Kant and Hume. He rejected the view of al-Ghazzali who upholds the concept of occasionalism, and prefers the explanation of philosophers such as Ibn Rushd, Ibn Sina, Kant and David Hume on cause and effect.

¹³⁰ Hamka, *Pelajaran Agama Islam*, 349-356.

¹³¹ Hamka, *TAZ*, Vol. 8, 5954.

their hearing and their eyes.¹³² These views correlate with Hamka's concept of *īmān*. According to Yunan Yusuf, Hamka is of the opinion that *īmān* which means belief, and *islām* as submission, will only manifest in someone when he/she has knowledge and understanding [of the truth of what is to be believed in and to be done].¹³³ Thus, *īmān* for Hamka is not only *taṣdīq* (acknowledgment), but also *ma'rifah* (knowledge of what is believed in) and *'amal* (action upon that knowledge).¹³⁴ He summarizes by stating that *īmān* is *qawl* (declaration) and *'amal* (action according to belief).¹³⁵

Although it is accepted among theologians (*mutakallimūn*) that God's Power and Will are Absolute, they, however, differ on the concept of this Absolute Power and Will of God. On this question and all questions pertaining to God's attributes and actions, Hamka took a practical position. Hamka is of the view that God's Power and Will do not occur arbitrarily. "Reason", for example, "cannot accept that God could be unjust [such as] by punishing the good and rewarding the evil".¹³⁶ He added, "the belief that God's Power and Will could occur arbitrarily (*sewenang-wenang*) is the cause of confusion in one's religious outlook". He gave many examples from the verses of the Qur'ān to show that God's Power and Will are limited by His own law, *sunnat Allāh*, which by Hamka's definition is related to cause and effect, and His Justice, *al-'Adl* which is His name and His promises that the good will be rewarded and the evil will be punished.

In Islamic theology as upheld by Hamka, the emphasis is on the benefit that mankind can derive from positive understanding about God which in turn can better the quality of faith and the quality and quantity of human good deeds. For in the *tawḥīdic*

¹³² See Yunan Yusuf, *Corak Pemikiran Kalam Tafsir al-Azhar*, 114-120.

¹³³ Ibid., 134.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 135.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 141. See also Hamka, *Pelajaran Agama Islam*, 81.

understanding, it does not hurt or benefit God one bit whether we are good or evil, but rather we are the beneficiary of the fruits of our own deeds, individually or as a society. Therefore, in theological discussions which involved the anthropomorphic description of God, such as the eyes, hand, and face of God, *ru'yat Allāh* (beatific vision), *khalq al-Qur'ān* (creation or createdness of the Qur'ān), for example, Hamka's position is to understand these descriptions metaphorically. In addition, he does not forget to instruct that the best position to take in this regard is "to accept the anthropomorphic descriptions as they are without questioning how they are, and not to associate those descriptions with God nor to divorce them from God's attributes. What the imagination can arrive at is not befitting to be associated with God, because there is nothing like Him".¹³⁷ His attitude towards *ru'yat Allāh* (beatific vision) in the hereafter and *khalq al-Qur'ān* are similar. Yunan Yusuf concludes that Hamka is not inclined to discuss matters which he gave indication as unproductive and a waste of time, and can result in senseless disagreement in society.¹³⁸ Nevertheless, Hamka indicates clearly that God will be seen but not through the limited eyes as humankind presently has, in his interpretation of verses on *ru'yat Allāh* i.e., *Sūrah 6 (al-An'ām)*: 103, *Sūrah 7 (al-A'rāf)*: 143 and *Sūrah 75 (al-Qiyāmah)*: 22-23.¹³⁹

Yunan Yusuf concludes that Hamka's theological thought is rational, similar to the school of thought of Māturīdī of Samarkand and the Mu'tazilah even though not always in agreement with them. On questions concerning the position of reason and the

¹³⁷Yunan Yusuf, *Corak Pemikiran Kalam Tafsir al-Azhar*, 161-162.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 165.

¹³⁹ The text read respectively, "No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp is over all vision. He is above all comprehension, yet acquainted with all things"; "When Moses came to the place appointed by Us, and his Lord addressed him, he said, 'O my Lord! Show yourself to me that I may look upon you'. God said, 'By no means can you see me (direct). But look upon the mountain. If it abides in its place, then will you see Me'. When his Lord manifested His glory on the mountain, He made it as dust, and Moses fell down in a swoon. When he recovered his senses he said, 'Glory be to you! To you I turn in repentance, and I am the first to believe'; "Some faces that day will beam (in brightness and beauty), Looking towards their Lord".

role of revelation, Hamka's view is similar to the school of Māturīdī of Bukhara.¹⁴⁰ Actually, nowhere can we find Hamka discussing his views in relation to the schools of thought of the past. He was propagating the thought of Modernist Muslim proponents which he thought was correct, practical and confirms the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

Hamka's Sufi Thought¹⁴¹

Hamka has written a number of books on sufism, such as *Pandangan Hidup Muslim* (Muslim Perspectives on Life)¹⁴², *Tasawuf Modern* (Modern Mysticism)¹⁴³, *Perkembangan Tasawuf dari Abad ke Abad* (The Development of Mysticism from Century to Century)¹⁴⁴, *Renungan Tasawuf* (Mystical Contemplation)¹⁴⁵ and *Tasawuf: Perkembangan dan Pemurniannya* (Mysticism: Its Development and Purification)¹⁴⁶ through which his sufi thought became known. Through his work we can gather that he was also a bold proponent of sufism, although like his father, he also criticizes some aspects of sufism ardently as the cause of the downfall of Islam. His support for sufism is not surprising, seeing that he descended from four generations of great sufi *shaykhs* of the Naqshbandiyyah order, the order with the greatest number of followers in the South-east Asian region. Although he acknowledges the corruption in sufism, and criticises them vehemently, he declares, "I am passionately fond of sufism. I am eager

¹⁴⁰ Māturīdī of Samarkand and Māturīdī of Bukhara are two schools of theological thought. The school of thought of Māturīdī of Samarkand shares some aspects of theology similar to the Mu'tazilah while the school of thought of Māturīdī of Bukhara shares some aspects similar to the Ash'ari's school. See Harun Nasution, *Teologi Islam: Aliran-aliran, Sejarah dan Analisa Perbandingan* [Islamic Theology: Sects, History and Comparative Analysis], (Jakarta: Penerbit Universitas Indonesia, 1986) 5th ed., 78.

¹⁴¹ We would like to note that there is a writing on Hamka by Nur Hadi Ihsan, titled *Hamka (1908-1981): A Study of Some Aspects of His Sufi Thought*, an unpublished Master's thesis at International Islamic University Malaysia, Petaling Jaya completed in 1996, a relevant material to be mentioned in this section which we have utilised here.

¹⁴² Hamka, *Pandangan Hidup Muslim*, 4th reprint., (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1992).

¹⁴³ Hamka, *Tasawuf Modern*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1990).

¹⁴⁴ Hamka, *Perkembangan Tasawuf dari Abad ke Abad*, (Djakarta: Pustaka Keluarga, 1958).

¹⁴⁵ Hamka, *Renungan Tasawuf*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1985).

¹⁴⁶ Hamka, *Tasawuf: Perkembangan dan Pemurniannya*, 12th ed., (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1984).

to use its teachings as a way of self-discipline (*riyāḍah*) so that I may attain direct contact with God in my journey of seeking Him".¹⁴⁷ What interests us most in Hamka's sufi thought is his idea of sufism.

Taṣawwuf, says Hamka is the purification of the soul (*pembersihan jiwa*), a method of disciplining the soul to reveal the humanity in humans. It is also an effort to know the secrets of creation through sensitising the feelings (*shu'ūr*).¹⁴⁸ This is to say that Hamka is of the opinion that the purpose of sufism is to bring out the goodness of man. As such, he includes certain types of scholars, artists, writers and poets as sufis because they are sensitive towards the creation of God.¹⁴⁹ By 'certain type' he means those who are virtuous morally and ethically, and sincerely searching for the truth. In some parts of his writings we get the feeling that to him, the Prophets and Messengers of God are sufis of the highest position.¹⁵⁰ In other writings, he indicates that sufism is a higher philosophy.¹⁵¹ He also says that sufism is pursued for the purpose of attaining direct access to God by means of getting rid of the veils that hinder oneself from attaining this goal. The veils are no other than the lowly human desires. Thus, to attain the goal, a sufi must embark upon many stages or journey, the first of which is *takhallī* (renunciation), to purify the heart from the lower self; the second *tahallī* (adornment), to adorn oneself with good manners and qualities, and the third *tajallī* (manifestation), to manifest the divine attributes in the sufi in such a way that the self ascends to a higher

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 45.

¹⁴⁸ Hamka, *Pandangan Hidup Muslim*, 22-24.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 46.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 22-27. He also includes the Buddha, Zarathustra, Socrates, Plato and the like as sufis.

¹⁵¹ See Hamka, *Falsafah Hidup*, 12th reprint, (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1994) 81. As a conclusion to his commentary on the Greek philosophers, he says, "Religion is not philosophy! But through philosophy, *īmān* in religion increases". Hamka also paraphrases ibn Rushd who said that for the philosophers, contentment or satisfaction in searching for *ma'rifah* (a higher truth or intuitive knowledge of the sufis) is true contentment or paradise.

level of spirituality.¹⁵² The purpose of attaining to God is for the love of Him not fear.¹⁵³

Hamka's sufism, just as in his theological thought, represents one that actively participated in society with sacrifices, struggle and hard work, which he believed to be the true spirit of sufism in Islam. He says, "true *taṣawwuf* (Ind. *Tasauf* or *tasawwuf*) is guidance in living this life. A genuine sufi does not leave for the jungle, but provides service to society because society needs spiritual guidance. . . . *Taṣawwuf* is practised through working".¹⁵⁴ One who would step forward as a leader when the world suffers from moral and spiritual decadence is a genuine sufi in Hamka's estimation.

Hamka's sufism embraces all scientific knowledge. For example, he says that, knowledge is the power (*sulṭān*) which the Qur'ān in Sūrah 55 (*al-Raḥmān*): 33, challenges the *Jinn* and mankind to have if they were to pass beyond the zones of the heavens and earth.¹⁵⁵ He praises the Russians for their success in launching the first space craft to the moon, making the point that man can achieve many things with knowledge. This, he mentions when discussing the importance of knowledge, and the need for *taṣawwuf* so that knowledge is not utilised for the wrong end, and in addition he also emphasises the importance of knowledge in order to know God.¹⁵⁶

What he criticises so vehemently in sufism is the practice of *rābiṭah* (union with the sufi *shaykh*) and *tawassul* (intercession).¹⁵⁷ *Rābiṭah* and *tawassul* resulted from the system of *ṭarīqah* which has always insisted on the attachment of the *murīd* (disciple) to the *shaykh* (sufi master) who guides his disciple through the different stages of spiritual

¹⁵² Hamka, *Pandangan Hidup Muslim*, 53-54.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 55-56.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 49-50.

¹⁵⁵ The text of the verse reads: O you assembly of *Jinns* and men! If it be that you can pass beyond the zones of the heavens and the earth, you may pass! But not without authority (*sulṭān*) will you be able to pass!

¹⁵⁶ Hamka, *Pandangan Hidup Muslim*, 92-97; 126-131.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 44, 56-60.

journey until the disciple achieves his goal. The master's guide in the spiritual journey is needed in identifying what is real, what is the way of God, what is false, and what is the way of the devil. *Rābiṭah* refers to the disciple's visualisation of the image of his *shaykh* in his utmost perfection, not only to attain total submission to his *shaykh* but also in identifying with him. The *murīd* loses himself completely in the image of his *shaykh*, reaching the level of "annihilation in the *shaykh* (*fanā' fī al-shaykh*)" in order to attain "annihilation in God (*fanā' fī Allāh*)".¹⁵⁸ When the disciple submits completely to his *shaykh*, the *shaykh* in turn carries him into the spiritual journey seeking God. The *shaykh* is therefore an intercessor between the disciple and God. The disciple, in making his prayers before performing the *dhikr* (repetition of certain words or formulas in remembrance of God), would say, "O God! I pray to You with the blessing of the Messenger of God and my Master, give me Your knowledge and love".¹⁵⁹ This practice of *tawassul* extends further to the graves of dead holy men or saints, asking them to intercede for the living. In his comments Hamka says,

How is it that when we need something from God we ask from the grave of a dead sufi master? Sometimes doing a *dhikr* and prayer for him? Whereas if he was truly a saint, he does not need our prayer. He would already have been saved and happy. As for asking him to intercede for us, or asking for blessing, how can it be when there is nothing but gravestones and bones! [What is the point of all these] when we can directly communicate with God.¹⁶⁰

In elaboration of the concept of *tawassul* which he condemns, Hamka mentions the hierarchy of the saints through which prayer goes through before it reaches God. They

¹⁵⁸ Wan Sabri Wan Yusuf, *Hamka's Tafsīr al-Azhar: Qur'ānic Exegesis as a Mirror of Social Change*, 209.

¹⁵⁹ Sheikh Haji Jalaluddin, *Pertahanan Tarekat Naqshabandiyah*, (n.c.: n.p., n.d.) 63 as quoted in Nur Hadi Ihsan, *Hamka (1908-1981): A Study of Some Aspects of His Sufi Thought*, (unpublished MA thesis, International Islamic University, Petaling Jaya, 1996) 62.

¹⁶⁰ Hamka, *Pandangan Hidup Muslim*, 57.

are the *watad* the plural of which is *awtād*, the pillars of the world. There are twelve of them. Higher in rank than the *watad* are the nine *aqtāb* (sg. *qutb*) or the spiritual pole. The highest in rank is the *ghawth*. He says that some added that after the *ghawth*, the prayer has to go through Nur Muḥammad before it reaches God.¹⁶¹ This concept and practise is clearly against the concept of *tawḥīd*. The true path to God is the quickest, says Hamka. This can be achieved by performing spiritual services to God i.e., prayers and fasting for spiritual uplift, righteous deeds (*ʿamal al-ṣāliḥ*), upholding noble character, establishing compassionate relationships with other humans, making supplications (*duʿāʾ*) and avoiding evil.¹⁶² Thus according to Hamka, relationship with God is attained through individual efforts and genuine *taṣawwuf* stems from *tawḥīd*.

Hamka and Tafsīr al-Azhar

Among the most valuable of Hamka's contribution to the Muslims in the Malay archipelago is his masterpiece *Tafsīr al-Azhar*. In it is captured the wisdom and lifetime experience of the writer. *Tafsīr al-Azhar* is the product of the twentieth century Indonesian environment. We can describe it as a socio-religious literary work which also reflects the personality and thought patterns of its writer. This *tafsīr* continues to be a resource for students of the Qurʾānic and social sciences especially those in the Malay speaking world.

According to Hamka, the writing of *Tafsīr al-Azhar* was started in 1958, first as a forty-five minute lesson (Ind. *kuliah Subuh*) to be delivered after the *Ṣubḥ* prayer

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 56.

¹⁶² Hamka, *Renungan Tasauf*, 21.

(morning prayer) at the newly built mosque, *Masjid Agung Kebayoran Baru*, where he was the imam. This mosque was renamed *Masjid Agung al-Azhar* in 1960.¹⁶³ These lessons were later published in the magazine *Gema Islam* (Islamic Echo) from 1962 to 1964. Progress of the *tafsīr* had been very slow; from 1962 to 1964 he managed to complete only one and a half *juz'* (part) out of 30 due to his social and public responsibilities including being a visiting lecturer at a number of local universities.¹⁶⁴ He had started his commentary with *juz'* number 17 starting with *Sūrah al-Mu'minūn* feeling that he might not be able to complete the whole *tafsīr* in his lifetime. However, he was arrested on the 27th of January, 1964 and imprisoned for two years and four months, falsely accused by Sukarno's government, of attempting to assassinate the Minister of Religion and attempting to topple the government and therefore, was able to complete the whole *tafsīr* during imprisonment.¹⁶⁵

The commentary was called *Tafsīr al-Azhar* because it was started in the *Masjid Agung Kebayoran Baru*, later renamed *Masjid al-Azhar*, by Sheikh Maḥmūd Shalṭūt, the Rector of Al-Azhar University in Cairo, when he visited Hamka there in 1960 at the so called mosque in Jakarta. The two men had met previously in 1958 when Hamka was invited to Cairo and gave a speech entitled "*The Influence of Muhammad 'Abduh in Indonesia and Malaya*" and to receive his honorary degree. However, due to the political situation in the Middle East at the time, with Egypt and Syria uniting as a country, the delivery of the degree was postponed to March 1959. Thus Hamka became the first person to receive the first honorary doctoral degree given by Al-Azhar

¹⁶³Hamka, *TAZ*, Vol. 1, 48.

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 50-51.

University. The degree was given in acknowledgement of his activities and services to Islamic causes, namely *da'wah*.¹⁶⁶

According to Hamka, the *tafsīr* was written, firstly, to fulfill the need of the people especially the younger generation in the Malay speaking region, who do not understanding the Arabic language, to understand the content of the Qur'ān. Secondly, it was to help those engaged in doing *da'wah* (teaching or preaching Islam) who knew some Arabic but whose general knowledge about the Qur'ān and its contents were limited, thus limiting their ability to explain the Qur'ān clearly and well to their audience.¹⁶⁷

In consideration of his audience, the Malay-speaking people at large or the *jama'ah* (congregation) of Masjid Al-Azhar in particular (whom he had in mind when writing the *tafsīr*), the content of *Tafsīr al-Azhar* was written in Malay, in a style not too academic or difficult for unspecialized readers nor too simple for those familiar with *tafsīr*. The language is simple, but that does not undermine the *tafsīr*'s intellectual standard. It shows Hamka's ability to make difficult ideas easily understood. The language was made simple because the *jama'ah* comprised people from all walks of life; from professionals and intellectuals titled "Professor" and "Doctor" to students, from very high to low ranking military officers, from big and small business people, to waiters and waitresses, cooks and gardeners and all their family.¹⁶⁸

Hamka listed 45 primary sources that he referred to, in order to write his *tafsīr*. The materials are the major classical and modern *tafsīr* including *Shī'ī* and Indonesian ones. Other materials are Arabic classical lexicons, classical works of *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*,

¹⁶⁶Ibid., 44. The original speech was in Arabic translated into Malay Language and published by Tintamas in Jakarta, 1961 as *Pengaruh Muhammad 'Abduh di Indonesia*.

In 1974, Hamka received another honorary degree from University Kebangsaan Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur.

¹⁶⁷TAZ., 4.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., 41.

taṣawwuf, *sīrah*, *kalām*, and philosophy. He also mentioned that he referred to numerous books by modern writers and western writers.¹⁶⁹ This indicates Hamka's attempt to be comprehensive and objective in his commentary. Furthermore, he does not only combine the method of classical and modern *tafsīr*, but also drew from Sunni, Shī'ī and Mu'tazilī *tafsīr* in addition to his own ideas and experience. He clearly stated his position regarding the course of his *tafsīr*.

The commentator carefully preserved the relationship between *naqal* (Ar. *naql*; transmitted text) and *akal* (Ar. *'aql*; reason and the use of reason in interpreting sacred text); between *riwayah* (tradition) and *dirayah* (reasoning). The author did not merely quote the previous scholars but he employed his own observations and personal experience. Nor did he merely follow his own reasoning and marginalize the opinions of previous scholars. A *tafsīr* which relied merely on the opinions of previous scholars' opinions is only "textbook thinking".¹⁷⁰ On the other hand, an author who relied only on his own reasoning stands in great danger of . . . overstepping the limits of religion.¹⁷¹

In addition, Hamka also explains that in his observations, a *tafsīr* carries the worldview of its *mufasssir*. As a result, the message of the Qur'ān which is clear became narrowed due to the interpretation of the *mufasssir* in order, for example, to suit the *mufasssir*'s *madhhab* or way of thinking. This tendency is found in the commentaries of Zamakhsharī, al-Alūsī and al-Rāzī. According to Hamka, the Qur'ānic verses are perfectly clear and he did not want to restrict their meanings as others had by squabbling about *madhhab* differences.¹⁷² Thus, he cautioned his readers not to be surprised if they should find any explanation of his that are not usually found in other

¹⁶⁹Ibid., unnumbered pages at the end of *TAZ*, Vol. 1.

¹⁷⁰The phrase "textbook thinking" according to Hamka means rigidity in thinking as a result of defending sacred text without understanding its deeper meaning and implication. This attitude results in rigidity and fanaticism in religion. It looks with suspicion at every new idea fearing its encroachment upon the established ones. See *TAZ*, Vol. 1, 182.

¹⁷¹*TAZ*, 40.

¹⁷²Ibid., 40.

tafsīr. He considered himself following *madhhab salafī*, the *madhhab* of the Prophet and his Companions which means, according to him, that he accepted matters of worship (‘*ibādah*’) without question but with regard to personal opinions he preferred to choose right from wrong through rational argument.¹⁷³

From a methodological point of view, as Hamka himself admits, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* is modelled after *Tafsīr al-Manār* of Rashīd Riḍā who wrote his *tafsīr* based on the thought of Muḥammad Abduh. Apart from that, he also confesses to be very influenced by Sayyid Quṭb’s *Fī Zilāl al-Qur’ān* which he praised as a *tafsīr* which has successfully contextualised the verses of the Qur’ān in the modern socio-political conditions of its time.¹⁷⁴ While *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Fī Zilāl al-Qur’ān* is more preferred, he also admitted to be influenced by a few more *tafsīr*: *Tafsīr al-Marāghī* by Aḥmad Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī (d. 1945), and *Maḥāsīn al-Ta’wīl* of Muḥammad Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī (d. 1914).

Like *Tafsīr al-Manār*, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* covers a wide range of subjects such as ‘*aqīdah*’ or ‘*ilm al-kalām*, *fiqh*, ḥadīth, history, politics, mysticism, modern sciences and social issues. Again, like *Tafsīr al-Manār*, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* contains not only commentaries of the Qur’ān on religious subjects, but also non-religious subjects. He also made legal judgements on socio-political and cultural issues.

Tafsīr al-Azhar begins with discussing the science of the Qur’ān, inimitability of the Qur’ān, and the meaning of the term “Qur’ān”. It also discusses the qualifications and the strict requirements and conditions of the Qur’ānic commentators listed by the scholars of old. On this matter, Hamka is of the opinion that the requirements have long become an instrument to strike fear into the hearts of new or young scholars, instead of a safeguard for quality control. The list of requirements also neglected to include the

¹⁷³Ibid., 41.

¹⁷⁴Ibid.

importance of knowledge of the natural sciences. This should not be the case, he argued, because the Qur'ān is full of verses dealing with nature rather than with law (*ḥukm*).¹⁷⁵

Tafsīr al-Azhar is a well-organised *tafsīr*. It comes provided with a table of contents of themes in each *sūrah*. In the course of his commentary, Hamka divides his interpretation into several subtopics, indicating the subject matter of that particular passage in the Qur'ān. Every *sūrah* is divided into a variety of themes addressed by that *sūrah*. Like *Tafsīr al-Manār*, it adopts a somewhat thematic approach to the Qur'ān. Thus, when discussing a theme, cross-references with similar themes from other *sūrahs* is done.

What makes *Tafsīr al-Azhar* interesting is the theme discussed is then related to issues which are almost always related to the Indonesian context whether the issues are religious like *'aqīdah*, *fiqh*, and *taṣṣawwuf*, or social-political and moral issues, like the contemporary religious polemics during his time, controversial issues like Christian-Muslim marriages in Indonesia, corruption in the government, birth control, Muslim-Christian relations, etc. The *tafsīr* also discusses the negative and positive impact of modern ideas in relation to Islam. As mentioned before, since the language used is simple, the *tafsīr* can be categorised as easy reading as well as engaging. Reading *Tafsīr al-Azhar* is like reading a story book on human responsibilities in Islam with many side stories beside them. Without doubt this *tafsīr* is one of Hamka's greatest contributions to Islamic society in general, and to the Malay archipelago particularly. This voluminous *tafsīr* is a complete *tafsīr* written by one man rendering all his knowledge in it.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., 4-6, 28.

Conclusion

We have provided a brief account of Hamka, an important Modernist Muslim figure in the Malay speaking world, whose *Tafsīr al-Azhar* is one of the subjects of our study with regard to the topic of this thesis, *ṭā'ah*. His educational background, his career, his theological and sufi thoughts are consistent with the modernist tendency. His voluminous *tafsīr* and other written works have become not only a great contribution in the Malay world but have also acted as a continuation of the Modernist Muslim tradition in this area. In this aspect, his most original contribution is the ability to contextualise the Qur'ān in the Malay world in general, and Indonesia in particular.

CHAPTER THREE

Ṭā'ah to God and His Messenger

Introduction

Any discussion on the concept of *ṭā'ah* is inseparable from and would be incomplete without discussing *tawḥīd* (lit. unifying, but understood as 'unity of God' but best translated as absolute monotheism). It is from the affirmation and acceptance of *tawḥīd* that Islam, as a religion, can be understood. *Ṭā'ah* (lit. obedience) is almost synonymous in meaning to *Islām* (lit. surrender, submission). However, the concept of *ṭā'ah* will be best explained by discussing its relationship with specific injunctions in the Qur'ān concerning the obligatory duties to render obedience to specific persons. Thus, it is important to know sufficiently what *tawḥīd* is: its demands and implications, before the concept of *ṭā'ah* can be discussed.

Tawḥīd

Tawḥīd, when translated as the "unity of God", loses the grand and awesome meaning in which the Muslims understand it. In fact, it can be said that "unity of God" does not convey the meaning of *tawḥīd* correctly. Apart from carrying the meaning "intolerant of all pluralism" as Cragg claims¹⁷⁶, *tawḥīd* is not merely a belief, but the very basis of the Islamic worldview. As a simple statement, *tawḥīd* is accepting and affirming that "there is no god but God" worthy of worship as in the credal statement, *shahādah* or witnessing, *lā ilāha illa 'llāh*. The emphasis of *tawḥīd* is God, i.e., that the idea of

¹⁷⁶"*Tawḥīd* is a causative and intensive noun and never means 'unity' still less 'unitariness, as an abstract state. It is aggressive . . . antiseptic: it means 'unity' intolerant of all pluralism". See the *Introduction* to Muhammad 'Abduh, *The Theology of Unity*, [trans. by Ishaq Musa'ad and Kenneth Cragg from *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*], (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1966) 12.

monotheism is a logical imperative.¹⁷⁷ It implies the acceptance of God as *al-Rabb* as in the concept of *tawhīd rubbubīyyah*, i. e., the Creator, Sustainer, Protector and Master, and *al-Ilāh* as in the concept of *tawhīd uluhiyyah*, i.e., the Only and rightful One who deserves to be worshipped and to whom worship is due.¹⁷⁸ The *shahādah* is further complemented and clarified by the Qur'ānic *al-asmā' al-ḥusnā* (the beautiful names of God) also known as the 'ninety-nine attributes of God'¹⁷⁹, which through deliberation on these attributes allows limited man to know the unlimited God in the best limited manner possible, in order to comprehend "the infinite majesty of God and His equally infinite mercy".¹⁸⁰ As a matter of principle, one of the implications of *kalimat al-*

¹⁷⁷Fazlur Rahman argues philosophically that among the aspects of which the Qur'ān keeps reminding Man is that "everything except God is contingent upon God, including the entirety of nature . . . the whole nature is one firm, well-knit structure with no gaps, no ruptures and no dislocations. It works by its own laws, which have been ingrained in it by God, and is, therefore autonomous; but it is not autocratic, for, in itself, it has no warrant for its own existence and it cannot explain itself. This lack of rational and moral ultimacy raises the al-important question of whence it derives its being". Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'ān*, (Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980), 2-3; henceforth cited as *Major Themes*. Note that the arguments for the existence of God rest on the existence of nature, and also rely on the use of logic and philosophy. See Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, *A Commentary on the Creed of Islam, on the Creed of Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafī*, (translated with introduction and notes by Earl Edgar Elder), (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980 edition), chapters 3-4, 28-48. See also Richard J. McCarthy, *The Theology of Al-Ash'arī*, "Highlights of the Polemic against Deviators and Innovators" (a translation of the *Kitāb al-Luma' fī al-Radd 'alā Ahl al-Zaigh wa al-Bida'* of Abu al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Ismā'īl al-Ash'arī), (Beyrouth: Imprimerie Catholique, 1953), 6-8.

¹⁷⁸For complete information about *tawhīd uluhiyyah* and *tawhīd rubbubīyyah* see Jamā'ah min al-'Ulamā' (eds.), *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah al-Ṭahāwīyyah*, (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islāmiy, 1984), 8th ed., 78-82.

¹⁷⁹According to Robert Stade in his book *Ninety-nine Names of God*,

"The great majority of the names of God as they are listed [in the list of *al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā*] are taken either as they are found in the Qur'ān or as they are implied by a given verse or verses of the Qur'ān. Some of them are found with the definite article, some without; some are made definite by a definite complement and some remain indefinite; and some are found definite in one passage and indefinite in another. When a given name is made definite, the word assumes a special sense, attributing to God *par excellence* that quality of which it speaks".

Stade also notes that in an article to be found in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. XII, London, 1880, J.W. Redhouse, lists 552 names of God as he found them in his research and then goes on to say, "Doubtless many another will be chanced upon and there is every probability that a thousand can be collected and surpassed". See Robert Stade, *Ninety-nine Names of God*, (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1970) 6.

¹⁸⁰See for example, Qur'ān 59 (*Sūrat al-Ḥashr*): 22-24:

He is God, other than Whom, there is none; He is the knower of the unseen and the seen, the Merciful, the Compassionate. He is the God other than Whom there is none, the Sovereign, the Holy, the One with

tawhīd, is that God is One and Only (*al-Wāḥid*), whose Trancendence (*al-Muta'ālī*) is Absolute (*al-Ṣamad*). Although man can be near to God, "no man or being [can be] one iota nearer to God than any other".¹⁸¹ What this means is that God is God, and creature is creature, and that these two realities "Creator and creation, are utterly and absolutely disparate as far as their being, or ontology, as well as their experience and careers, are concerned".¹⁸² That God alone is the Creator (*al-Khāliq*) and Sustainer (*al-Razzāq*), the Protector (*al-Ḥafīz*), Compassionate (*al-Raḥmān*) and Merciful (*al-Raḥīm*), who gives and takes away Life (*al-Muḥyi* and *al-Mumīt*) and All Hearing (*al-Samī'*), All Seeing (*al-Baṣīr*), All Knowing (*al-'Alīm*) of what is hidden and manifest [because He is the Hidden and the Manifest One i. e., *al-Bāṭin* and *al-Zāhir* respectively] who is All Powerful (*al-Qadīr*) and Mighty (*al-Jabbār*), Just (*al-'Adl*), who can give benefit and cause harm (*al-Nāfi'* and *al-Ḍār*) with none sharing in any of His attributes, is sufficient for the believers to feel secure facing any creature or problems. Such a belief would directly affect and influence their behaviour morally and ethically if the concept of *tawhīd* is truly internalized.¹⁸³ The necessity of the existence of God and His Oneness becomes essential when considered metaphysically and also plays a crucial

peace and integrity, the Keeper of the Faith, the Protector, the Mighty, the One Whose Will is Power, the Most Supreme! Glory be to Him beyond what they (the pagans) associate with Him. He is the God, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner, to Whom belong beautiful names; whatever is in the heavens and the earth sings His glories, He is the Mighty One, the Wise One. Note: All translation of the Qur'ān are taken from A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'ān: Text, Translation and Commentary*, (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1975) henceforth cited when necessary as *TAYA*. Sometimes the translation is modified for the sake of clarity.

¹⁸¹ Ismā'īl Rājī al-Fārūqī, *Al-Tawhīd*, 3.

¹⁸² Ibid. 10.

¹⁸³ See Abdel Haleem Mahmud, *The Creed of Islam* [trans. into English by Mahmud Abdel Haleem], (London: World of Islam Festival Trust, 1978) 51-52;

See also Zakaria Stapa, "Konsep Tauhid: Pendekatan dari Sudut Pandangan Sufi [The Concept of Tawhīd: Sūfī Perspective]" in *Isu-isu dalam Usuludīn dan Falsafah* [Issues in Theology and Philosophy], (eds. Husin and others), (Bangi: University Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1993) 152-166, 157.

role as a cementing agent of faith. As in the words of Fazlur Rahman, if there is no faith in God, "the preservation of and order in nature (i.e., Providence), guidance, and judgement on 'the end of affairs' (*'āqibat al-umūr*; i.e., eschatology) either become simply dubious or at least become so many discrete issues, each to be discussed separately and accepted or rejected, that the entire chain falls to pieces".¹⁸⁴ With belief in the One Omnipotent God, everything follows in a logical order, thus belief in the One Omnipotent God becomes "the [linking] piece of the whole chain, giving it meaning".¹⁸⁵ It is important to emphasise that there are numerous Qur'ānic verses which coupled the mention of belief in God and belief in the hereafter.¹⁸⁶ This explicitly illustrates the close connection between belief in God, and personal accountability and Judgement in the hereafter. The meaning of *tawhīd*, therefore, is not simply the "belief" in one God but "bearing witness" that there is One God which comprises also the understanding of who or what God is and is not, and how to behave or interact in relation to Him, and to creatures and objects other than Him.¹⁸⁷ The concept requires a rational understanding of God, and the concept of God in Islam is totally devoid of myth since its beginning.¹⁸⁸

Although it is relevant to note that there exists an abundant literature, which relates fanciful legends and miracle stories about the Prophet Muḥammad,¹⁸⁹ these

¹⁸⁴ *Major Themes*, 10.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ See Qur'ān 2: 232, 2: 264; 3: 114; 4: 38; 4: 59, 4: 162; 8:41, 9:29,9:99; 24: 2; 65: 2; etc.

¹⁸⁷ See also Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam: Doktrin dan Peradaban* [Islam: Doctrine and Civilization], (Jakarta: Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina, 1992) 75, 99-100.

¹⁸⁸ To compare the concept of God in other religions and myths and legends relating to God, see Huston Smith, *The Religions of Man*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1965). See also *A Handbook of Christian Theology*, (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1958) on topics such as "Christ", 46-52; "God", 147-153; "Logos", 214-215; "Myth (Demythologizing)", 236-237; etc.

¹⁸⁹ See Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger*, (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), Chapter 4 on "Legend and Miracles", 67-80. See also *Muhammad Messenger of Allah, Ash-Shifa of Qadi 'Iyad*, [translated by Aisha Abdarrahman Bewley from *Al-Shifā' bi*

materials actually contradicts the Qur'ān. This is to say that although Islam does not reject miracles performed by the Messengers of God to attest the truth of their message, the Qur'ān is explicit that except for the Qur'ān itself, Muḥammad did not perform supernatural miracles. In fact, it comments rather sharply on the issue upon an occasion when the Prophet was feeling rather uneasy that supernatural miracles were not available to him, as can be seen in Sūrah 6 (*al-An'ām*): 33-35,¹⁹⁰

We know, indeed, that what they say grieves you (O Muḥammad), but the wicked ones are not just rejecting you; they are rejecting the signs (*āyāt*) of God. Messengers before you have been repudiated (by their peoples), but they bore with patience their repudiation and their persecution until Our succour came to them. . . . If their rejection (of your message) weighs heavily on you, then, if you can, seek out a hole in the earth or (climb up) to the heavens by a ladder and bring them a miracle (*āyah*)! If God had so willed, He would have united all people on (this) Guidance--so, do not be among the ignorant ones.

The argument for the concept of *tawḥīd* as highly rational can be easily traced to the Qur'ān itself.¹⁹¹ This rational line of thought is also demonstrated by writers of Islamic theological works in explaining the attributes of God and justifying the need to serve God, the demands that worship and all action be performed for the sake of God alone.¹⁹²

Ta'rīf Ḥuqūq Muṣṭafā of Abū al-Faḍl 'Iyād al-Yaḥsūbī, (Granada: Madinah Press, 1992), Chapter 4, 134-206.

¹⁹⁰See *Major Themes*, 77-78. See also Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *TAM*, [on *Ḥikmah Ju'ila Mu'jizah Nabīyyina 'Ilmiyyah*], Vol. 7, 255 for a short discussion on the Qur'ān being a rational miracle.

¹⁹¹The Qur'ān argues with rational proofs, as well as demands for them. See Qur'ān 21 (*Sūrat al-Anbiyā*): 22, "If there were, in the heavens and the earth, other gods besides God, there would have been confusion in both! But glory to God, the Lord of the Throne, Transcendent beyond all their description of Him"; 21: 24, "Or have they taken for worship gods beside Him? Say (O Muḥammad!), 'Bring your convincing proof [of other god beside Him]' . . ."

¹⁹²See Ismā'īl Rājī al-Fārūqī, *Al-Tawḥīd*; Al-Ghazzālī, *The Foundations of the Articles of Faith* (trans. by Nabih Amin Faris from *Kitāb Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id of Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*), (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1974) 1-6; A. R. Sutan Mansur, *Tauhid Membentuk Pribadi Muslim* [Tawḥīd Shapes the Muslim Personality], (Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Melayu Baru, 1978); Muhammad b. Abdul-Wahhab, *Kitab at-Tauhid* [trans. into English by Compilation and Research Department Dar-us-Salam], (Riyadh: Dar-us-Salam Publications, 1996). See Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, *A Commentary on the Creed of Islam, on the*

In addition, much is also said by them about the implications of *tawhīd* in human thought and life, of how the belief in God will alone free human beings from the enslavement of man by man.¹⁹³ This understanding arises as a result of the discussion that since God alone is Powerful and the Creator of everything, the conclusion must be that all human beings are equal. In other words, since God the Creator is One, humanity also is one since all of us were created by Him. Therefore, while it is true that the study of *tawhīd* is about God, it serves as a reflection upon His creations and thus, it is also about mankind. Most Modernist works which involve the discussion of *tawhīd* emphasise that *tawhīd* serves as a guide for man in how to perceive himself and the world correctly and how to behave in Truth and Justice, deserving his place as a true vicegerent of God, for *tawhīd* is the embodiment of the Absolute, Truth, Justice, Integrity, Mercy and Beauty as explained in the Qur'ān through *al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*.

Shirk

The emphasis of *tawhīd* is not just on the acceptance of correct belief but also on correct action. *Tawhīd* comes with a package of *dos* and *don'ts* such that the abandonment of even one precept may cause one to commit *shirk* (associating others either in divinity or power with God). It is also helpful to discuss *shirk* in order to be enlightened about *tawhīd*.

Creed of Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafī, chapters 3-4, 28-48; see also Richard J. McCarthy, *The Theology of Al-Ash'arī*, "Highlights of the Polemic against Deviators and Innovators" (a translation of the *Kitāb al-Luma' fī al-Radd 'alā Ahl al-Zaigh wa al-Bida'* of Abu al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Ismā'īl al-Ash'arī), 6-8.

¹⁹³See Hamka, *Studi Islam* (Islamic Studies), "Doktrin Islam yang Menimbulkan Kemerdekaan dan Keberanian [Islamic Doctrine which Instilled the Spirit of Independence and Courage]", (Singapore: Pustaka Nasional Pte. Ltd., 1982), 254-276; See also Ismā'īl Rājī al-Fārūqī, *Al-Tawhīd*, 15. See also Abdel Haleem Mahmud, *The Creed of Islam* (London: World of Islam Festival Trust, 1978).

Shirk is the opposite of *tawḥīd*. It is the belief that there are "god/gods" other than God. Fazlur Rahman argues,

The Qur'ānic condemnation of *shirk* has its roots firmly in the metaphysical realm and issues forth in the moral field. In the metaphysical realm, [where it is found that God cannot be regarded as an existent among other existents], there can be no democratic and equal sharing of being between the Original, the Creator, the Self-Necessary, and the borrowed, the created, the contingent; such a "sharing" rather exists within the second category itself.¹⁹⁴

The above statement is the rational argument against *shirk*. The condemnation of *shirk* is due to the unfeasibility of the mind to accept such a proposition. This is because, whenever one tries to conceive more than one God, only one will be found to emerge as the First. Therefore, *shirk* is illogical, a falsehood, and an untruth.¹⁹⁵ *Shirk*, at the level of practice, is reflected in the attitude of directing or giving worship (*'ibādah*) or even giving precedence to other than God, and deciding what is lawful and unlawful (*ḥalāl* and *ḥarām*) not based on Revelation, i.e., not based on the guidance of God.¹⁹⁶ Both these points have their justification in the Qur'ān, as, for example, in *Sūrah al-Jāthiyah*¹⁹⁷ (45): 23 which reads:

Have you seen him who has taken his vain-desire (*hawā*) for his god, and God has, knowing (him as such) led him astray, and sealed his hearing and his heart [i.e., his

¹⁹⁴ *Major Themes*, 4.

¹⁹⁵ See the Qur'ānic argument, Qur'ān 16: 51, "And God has said, 'Do not take two gods for He is only One'; 3: 18, " God bears witness that there is no god, but He"; 17:42, "Say (O Muḥammad!) if there were other gods besides Him, as these people assert, they would all (necessarily) seek their way to the (One) Lord of the Throne".

¹⁹⁶ Muḥammad Quṭb, *Koreksi atas Pemahaman La Ilaha Illa Allah* [A Correction Upon the Understanding of *Lā ilāha illa Allāh*], (trans. by Yudian W. Asmin and Ahsin W. Sarjana from the Arabic, *Mafāhim Yanbaghī 'An Tuṣaḥḥah* [Concepts that Leads to Self-Rectification]), (Jogjakarta: Al-Kauthar, 1987) 31. See also Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān*, (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1966) 131.

¹⁹⁷ See also the Qur'ān 25:43; 7:176; 18:28; 28:50.

understanding], and put a cover on his sight. Who then will guide him after God (has withdrawn Guidance)? Will you then not receive admonition?¹⁹⁸

Muḥammad Quṭb like many Muslim scholars explains the above verse to mean that when one does not worship the true God, one's own desire could become one's God.¹⁹⁹

Muḥammad Quṭb goes on to comment that "the human nature (*fiṭrah*) has been created to be a worshipper."²⁰⁰ He adds,

Not a moment passes by man's life where he does not "worship", either consciously or unconsciously. In each moment, man lives within two probability: worshipping God in a tawḥīdic manner; or worshipping other than God, with [i.e., worshipping something in association with God] or without God [following one's fancy and whims or one's created idol], which in the Qur'ān is called worshipping "Satan" because it is no more than the call of "Satan" [as what is meant] in *Sūrah Yāsīn* (36): 60-61 which reads:

Did I not enjoin on you O children of Adam, that you should not worship Satan; for he is to you an avowed enemy? And that you should worship me for this is the straight way.²⁰¹

What is meant by worship in the above context, Muḥammad Quṭb points out, is explained by another verse in *Sūrah Luqmān* (31): 21 which reads:

When they are told to follow the Revelation God has sent down, they say: "Nay we shall follow the ways that we found our fathers (following)". What! even if it is [as if] Satan beckoning them to the Fire?

and by *Sūrah al-An'ām* (6):148 which reads:

¹⁹⁸All translation of the Qur'ān are taken from A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'ān: Text, Translation and Commentary*, (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1975) with minor modifications for the sake of clarity.

¹⁹⁹Muḥammad Quṭb, 23.

²⁰⁰For a detailed treatment of *fiṭrah* see Yasien Mohamed, *Fitra: The Islamic Concept of Human Nature*, (London: Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd., 1996)

²⁰¹Muḥammad Quṭb, 23.

Those who give partners (to God) will say: "If God had wished, we would not have given partners to Him, nor would our fathers; nor would we have any taboos". So did their ancestors argue falsely, until they tasted our wrath. Say [O Muḥammad]: "Have you any (certain) knowledge? If so, produce it before us. You follow nothing but conjecture. You do nothing but lie."²⁰²

The verses above are cited by Muḥammad Quṭb to illustrate that *shirk* comes in many forms. Associating divinity with other than God is not a small matter. Even one's own desire may become one's God; and in addition, every untruth and innovation without justification from Revelation is *shirk*. Izutsu aptly summarizes the Qur'ānic explanation of *shirk*, that it is attributed to false knowledge or unreliable opinion. Izutsu says:

The Qur'ān attributes *shirk* ultimately to the working of the mental faculty of *ẓann*, 'thinking', a word which is used as a general rule in contrast to '*ilm*' 'knowledge (established unshakeably on the basis of reality)', and denotes accordingly a groundless unwarranted type of thinking, uncertain or doubtful knowledge, unreliable opinion, or mere conjecture.²⁰³

Thus, *shirk* occurs due to the lack of true knowledge.

We find that other Muslim scholars also subscribe to a view similar to that of Muḥammad Quṭb concerning *shirk*. Fazlur Rahman for example wrote that:

[H]aving lost the transcendental anchoring point of human conduct, one must either "worship one's own (subjective) desires", or if one objectifies one's desires, worships "socialized desires"--self-projections of one's society: "And he (Abraham) said (to his people), you have adopted these idols besides God only as a way to socialize your mutual desires in this world (*mawaddata bainikum fī'l-ḥayāt al-dunyā*); but on the Last

²⁰²See also Qur'ān 16: 35.

²⁰³Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts*, 132.

Day you will disown each other and curse each other" (*Sūrah al-'Ankabūt* [29]: 25). When man's moral vision is narrowed and the transcendental dimension is gone, then, from the universally objective moral point of view, it is immaterial whether one worships oneself as God, or one's society or nation as God. All particularizing of Truth, whether individually subjective or socially (by nation or sect) subjective, numbs moral faculties, and numbs them equally. It is a large price to pay for one's smallness.²⁰⁴

Hence, it is this kind of understanding of *tawḥīd* that true Muslims are supposed to have, a kind of mental and moral alertness one has to guard oneself with, which comprise the Transcendental God, the Truth, in thoughts and deeds which includes self-restraint so as not to transgress the limits of God in His law and not to fall victim to one's own self-deception. This attitude is also called *taqwā*.²⁰⁵ Therefore, the verse in *Sūrah al-Ḥashr* (59): 19, "Do not be like those who forgot God and [eventually] He caused them to forget themselves--these are the unrighteous ones" is significant when one understands the psychological implication of *tawḥīd* and its significance in understanding that "in Islam, ethics proceeds from thinking about God"²⁰⁶.

Through the understanding of *tawḥīd*, the concepts of *islām* (surrender, submission) and *īmān* (faith, conviction) become apparent. Indeed, a great deal has been written about *islām* and *īmān* and the simple conclusion is, *islām* is sincere submission to God in words and deeds, *albeit* after total conviction (*īmān*) in what was sent by God through Revelation and His messenger, in which the adherence to *tawḥīd* demands. According to Izutsu, "[*īmān* and *islām*] are not exactly the same thing, but they are so inseparable from each other i.e., they form such a solid unity, that neither of them can

²⁰⁴ *Major Themes*, 27-28.

²⁰⁵ *Major Themes*, 28-36.

²⁰⁶ Tamara Sonn, *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, "Political Authority in Classical Islamic Thought", 309-324, 310.

exist without the other".²⁰⁷ Thus, Islam consists of correct knowledge of the faith which must lead to action. The component of knowledge of the faith is inseparable to action. The component of faith would be insufficient without action. Knowledge of faith, and action have a symbiotic relationship inseparable and incomplete without each other.

Ṭā'ah

True to its meaning, Islam as a religion demands total submission, i.e., submission to God. This submission manifests itself in the command to render *ṭā'ah* (obedience) first and foremost to God, secondly, to His messenger and then to the *ulū al-amr* (usually translated as those in authority; those in command) as in *Sūrah al-Nisā* (4):59:

O you who believe! Obey God [*aṭī'ū 'llāh*], and obey the Apostle [*wa aṭī'ū 'r-rasūl*], and those charged with authority [*wa ulī 'l-amr*] among you. If you differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to God and His Apostle, if you do believe in God and the Last Day; that is best, and most suitable for final determination.²⁰⁸

The interpretation that *ulū al-amr* encompasses all leaders whether in the political, social, intellectual or other spheres of life, i.e., those who are in command in their field of expertise, is presently accepted by modern *mufasssir* (Qur'ānic commentators).²⁰⁹ Beside what is mentioned above, the verses, such as *Sūrah al-Isrā'* (17): 23-24,

Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in your lifetime, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour. And, with kindness

²⁰⁷Toshihiko Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology: A Semantic Analysis of Īmān and Islām*, (Tokyo: Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1965) 66.

²⁰⁸See TAYA, 198.

²⁰⁹See the following chapter of this thesis, CHAPTER FOUR.

lower to them the wing of humility and say: My Lord! Bestow on them Your Mercy as they cherished me in childhood.²¹⁰

and *Sūrah Luqmān* (31): 14-15,

And we have entrusted on man his parents. In travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in two years was his weaning. (Hear the command), "Show gratitude to Me and to your parents, to Me is your final goal. But if they strive to make you join in worship with Me things of which you have no knowledge, obey them not [*fā lā tuṭi'humā*]; Yet bear their company in this life with justice (and consideration), and follow the way of those who turn to Me, and I will tell you the truth (and meaning) of all that you did.²¹¹

have been interpreted as commands to obey parents although the word *ṭā'ah* itself is not used. *Sūrah al-Nisā* (4): 34 which reads,

Men are protectors and maintainers of women, because God has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women [*ṣāliḥāt*] are devoutly obedient [*qānitāt*], and guard in (the husband's) absence what God would have them guard . . .²¹²

on the other hand, has been interpreted as a command for wives to obey their husbands, although here too, the word *ṭā'ah* itself is not used by the Qur'ān.

Note that in *Sūrah al-Nisā* (4): 59, the command to obey the *ulū al-amr* is not as explicit as the command to obey God and His messenger where the word *ṭā'ah* is used as in "*aṭī'ū llāh*" (Obey God), "*wa aṭī'ū r-rasūl*" (and obey the Messenger). In fact, there is no mention of "*aṭī'ū ulī l-amri minkum*" (obey those charged with authority

²¹⁰Ibid, 700-701.

²¹¹Ibid, 1082-1083; See also *Sūrah al-'Ankabūt* (29): 8, and *Sūrah al-Aḥqaf* (46): 15-18.

²¹²Ibid, 190-191.

among you); there exist only "*wa ulī l-amri minkum*" (and those charged with authority among you) without the word "*aṭī'ū*" (obey). This is not a simple technical point but matters a great deal in the discussion of *i'jāz al-Qur'ān* (miraculousness or infallibility or inimitability of the Qur'ān) where every single *sūrah*, *āyah*, word, phrase, preposition, inflection and stopping sign is supposed to be at the right place, carrying the correct meaning, causing wonderment and veneration to listeners and literary scholars alike.²¹³ Most importantly, there are a number of implications involved in every word used by the Qur'ān, and they are very significant in legal interpretation of Qur'ānic verses.

The word *ṭā'ah* according to Lane, is never used other than as a consequence of a command, mostly meaning obedience to a command. *Ṭā'ah* means submission or submissiveness, as in a person complying with what is desired of him.²¹⁴ This therefore, makes an interesting setting in view of the concept of *tawhīd* and opens to much social abuse especially in the realm of *ṭā'ah* to the *ulū al-amr*, parents and husbands if the proper understanding of *tawhīd* and *ṭā'ah* is not maintained.

In the following chapters, we will analyse, how the authors of *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar* deal with the concept of *ṭā'ah*. Our motivation is to find a legitimate pattern of conduct toward those who have authority over us according to the

²¹³See Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, (Beirut: Al-Maktabah al-Thaqafīyyah, 1973), Vol. 2, [in section "*al-Naw' al-Rābi' wa al-Sittūn fī I'jāz al-Qur'ān*", 116-125], 120-122. See also M. Haq, *Muhammad 'Abduh*, (Aligarh: 1968), 115. Muhammad 'Abduh was reported to have said: "Every word in the Qur'ān is placed in its proper place. There is not even a single word in the Qur'ān which can be held a subject to the requirement of a rhyming word (*fāṣila*) according to which it is decided as to which word should precede and which should follow. Such talk as the consideration for a rhyming word amounts to the affirmation of a short coming as is generally done in poetry where a word is placed before or after according to the necessity of rhyme. Qur'ān is the work of God who is free from such shortcomings". See also *Tafsīr al-Manār*, vol.1, 203: "[The Qur'ānic] vocabulary has the precision of meaning, the definite truths in its sentences, the blending of various meanings in its style, and the subtle connections between its verses (*āyāt*) and its chapters (*suwar*). What is more wonderful is its types of conciseness (in style) which is singularly peculiar to it, and its numerous repetitions of one single meaning through many mode of expressions which does not bore the reader nor those who listen. . ."

²¹⁴See Edward William Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, (Lahore: Islamic Book Centre, 1982) Bk 1, Pt. 5, 1891.

opinions of our *mufasssirs*, namely, Muḥammad ‘Abduh/ Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā and Hamka in particular because these scholars were acclaimed reformers whose ideology was based on returning to the purity of Islam according to the Qur’ān and Sunnah. In addition, they also gave an important place to reason in Islamic thinking.

In order to understand the concept of *ṭā’ah*, we would like to address these questions: 1. Who has authority over us and why must we obey? 2. When and in what situations do those with authority have power over us? Therefore, it is logical to discuss first of all, what is the meaning of *ṭā’ah* to God and His Messenger.

***Ṭā’ah* to God and the Messenger in the Qur’ān**

There are thirty-four *āyāt* in the Qur’ān explicitly commanding obedience to God and His Messenger, using the various derivatives and/or prefixes, 'middle'fixes and suffixes to *ṭ-w-’* with the meaning "obedience" (*ṭā’ah*).²¹⁵ There are also other words, in numerous *āyāt*, used as a command to obey explicit and implicitly. However, in order to simplify our task and for our specific purpose, i.e., to discuss *ṭā’ah* to God and His Messenger in this chapter, only those derived from *ṭ-w-’* are chosen. It is impossible to discuss verses on *ṭā’ah* to God and the Messenger separately since *ṭā’ah* to God is always mentioned along with *ṭā’ah* to the Messenger and never *ṭā’ah* to God alone. Most of these verses are phrased either in the form of *aṭī’ū allāha wa aṭī’ū ’r-rasūl* (obey God and obey the Messenger) when God commands obedience, or *fa ttaqū llāha wa aṭī’ū ni* (be conscious of God and obey me) when the Qur’ān quotes Muḥammad or other prophets summoning his/their people to obedience. As noted before, the

²¹⁵See Qur’ān 3: 32, 3: 50, 3:132; 4: 13, 4:59, 4: 69, 4: 80; 5: 92; 8: 1, 8: 20, 8: 46; 9: 71; 24: 47, 24: 51, 24:52, 24: 54; 26: 108, 26: 110, 26: 126, 26:131, 26: 144, 26: 150, 26: 163, 26:179; 33:33, 33: 66, 33: 71; 43: 63; 47: 33; 48:17; 49:14; 58: 13; 64: 12; 71: 3.

significance of the arrangement of the words, belongs to the discussion of the concept of *i'jāz* of the Qur'ān.

In examining the above mentioned *āyāt*, we find that the command to obey God and His Messenger is usually given as a result of a certain instruction, so that the instruction may be adhered to. An example can be illustrated here from *Sūrah al-Mā'idah* (5): 90-91, translated as:

O you who believe! Intoxicants and gambling, idolatry, and divination by arrows are an abomination of Satan's handiwork; abstain from such that you may prosper. Satan's plan is to excite enmity and hatred between you with intoxicants and gambling, and hinder you from the remembrance of God and from prayer; will you not then abstain?²¹⁶

After which the verse of obedience follows, as in 5: 92--

And obey God and obey the Messenger [*wa aṭī'ū allāha wa aṭī'ū r-rasūl*], and beware (of evil); if you turn back, know that it is Our Messenger's duty to proclaim (the Message) in the clearest manner.

Similarly after two long verses in *Sūrah 4(al-Nisā')*: 11-12 concerning the intricate law of inheritance, where God has determined to each member of a family of what portion of wealth they would inherit from either parents, spouse, sibling or child, comes verse 4: 13 which means:

Those are limits set by God; those who obey God and His Messenger [*man yuṭī 'i 'llāha wa rasū lahu*] will be admitted to gardens with rivers flowing beneath, to abide therein forever and that will be the supreme achievement.

²¹⁶TAYA, 260-270.

Another example is from *Sūrah* 33(*al-Aḥzāb*): 70-71 which means:

O you who believe! Be God conscious, and always say a word directed to the Right/Correctness [*sadīd*]. That He may make your conduct whole and sound and forgive you your sin; he that obeys God and His Messenger (*wa man yuṭī'i llāha wa rasū lahu*), has already attained the highest achievement.

There are numerous examples of similar verses but the above verses should suffice as representative. The message of all these verses is very clear, i.e., obedience to God and His Messenger is equal to all that is good and moral. This can be deduced from the outset even without further elaborate interpretation of the verses. The verses claim themselves that obedience to God and his Messenger will result in great achievement. In other words God demands obedience to God and His Messenger for the goodness of mankind.

It is also relevant to mention that other verses which imply the command of obedience as well as disobedience to other than God and His Messenger which are not included in the thirty-four verses mentioned above, reveal the same conclusion; which is, God demands that humankind obey all that is truthful, just and righteous, and to disobey injunctions to falsehood, injustice and wickedness. For example in *Sūrat* 49 (*al-Ḥujurāt*): 6-7 which read,

O you who believe! If a wicked person comes to you with any news, ascertain the truth, lest you harm people unwittingly, and afterwards become full of repentance for what you have done.

And know that among you is God's Messenger. Were he to obey your wishes (*yuṭī'ukum*) in many matters, you would certainly fall into misfortune. But God has endeared the faith to you and has made it beautiful in your hearts, and He has made hateful to you unbelief, wickedness and rebellion. Such indeed are those who walk in righteousness.

We can conclude from the above verses that God commands that truth must always be ascertained and it is the responsibility of the believer to ascertain and verify the truth. The verses also point out that the Messenger of God does not follow his or anybody else's whims or wishes but receives true guidance from God. Thus, those who follow him will not fall into misfortune. The verses we have quoted thus far illustrate that God's commandments have reasons behind them. Similarly, the Qur'ān in *Sūrah* 33 (*al-Aḥzāb*): 48 which reads,

Obey not the unbelievers and the hypocrites, and heed not their annoyances, but put your trust in God (*tawakkal*). For enough is God as a Disposer of affairs (*Wakīl*).

commands mankind not to obey the unbelievers and hypocrites, and not to heed their annoyances, because of their bad characters as described in other parts of the Qur'ān, for example in *Sūrah* 96 (*al-'Alaq*): 9-19,

Do you see one who forbids another to pray? Do you see if he is on the right guidance? Or enjoins righteousness? Do you see that he denies the truth and turns away? Doesn't he know that God sees? Let him beware! If he desist not, We will drag him by the forelock--a lying sinful forelock! Then let him call (for help) to his council (of comrades). We will call on the angels of punishment (to deal with him). Nay, heed him not (*lā tuṭi'hu*); but bow down in adoration and bring yourself to God.

Thus, from the example above, we can establish that God's command for obedience and/or disobedience is not arbitrary but that each commandment has wisdom behind it.

Ṭā'ah to God and His Messenger in Tafsīr al-Manār

We mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that the concept of *tawḥīd* is absolute. Therefore, *ṭā'ah* is to be rendered to God absolutely. How is it then that the Qur'ān commands obedience to the Messenger of God or to anyone else or anything for that matter? Isn't that tantamount to *shirk*?

In discussing verse 59, *Sūrah 4 (al-Nisā')* in *Tafsīr al-Manār*²¹⁷, Muḥammad 'Abduh notes that it is strange (*yastaghribu*) that God should command obedience to be rendered to other than the revelation of God (*waḥī*), since "the religion of Islam is a religion of absolute *tawḥīd*". It does not concede to other than God the right to command or to prohibit, to make law (*wa lā tashrī'an*) or to monopolize [religion].²¹⁸ However, 'Abduh explains that "obedience to God is [exemplified by] following the commands of His Book and obedience to the Messenger". This is due to the fact that "the Messenger is the interpreter to the people of what is revealed to them [in the Qur'ān]". He adds that God has not only sent messengers to convey to the people God's law or religion but also terse and succinct revelational verses to explain and show how to truly practice the demands of revelation. 'Abduh says,

The decree of God (*sunnat 'llāh*) determined that Messengers from among their own people convey His law/religion (*shar'*) to them. These Messengers were supported with infallibility (*'ismah*) in conveying their message. Thus it is necessary that the people should obey what was explained by the Messengers in matters of religion and law.²¹⁹

²¹⁷See *Sūrah 4 (al-Nisā')*: 59 which means approximately-- O you who believe! Obey God, and obey the Messenger, and those charge with authority among you. If you differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to God and His Messenger if you do believe in God and the Hereafter. That is the best and most suitable for final determination.

²¹⁸See *TAM*, Vol. 5, 180.

²¹⁹*Ibid.*

On how the Messenger explains and put into practice the demands of revelation, 'Abduh gave an example regarding the *ṣalāh* (prayer). He says,

although God prescribed (*shara'a*) upon us the prayer (*'ibādat al-salāh*), He did not explain in the Book its particulars, such as the number of units (sg. *raka'ah*, pl. *raka'āt*), the bowings (*rukū'*) and prostrations (*sujūd*), nor its appointed time. It is the Messenger who explained this to us by the command of God as mentioned in Sūrah 16(*al-Naḥl*): 44-- . . . And We have revealed to you the Message (*al-dhikr*) that you may explain clearly to mankind what we have sent to them . . .²²⁰

Thus, the role of the Messenger is not only to convey the message of revelation to mankind. The Messenger is also guided by God to elaborate and explain not only the meaning of the terse and succinct verses of revelation but also to provide the details of how to put into practice the demands of revelation, such as how to perform the prayers. The Prophet taught by his speech and realised the Qur'ānic message by his conduct. This includes his agreement and disagreement on all aspects of life. For example, concerning prayer, there is a *ḥadīth* where the Messenger was reported to have said, "pray as you see me pray".²²¹ There are many other examples concerning Islamic life and rituals which the Qur'ān commands but are silent on the details of the modes or methods of action which are explained through the Messenger's or Prophet's practice called *sunnat al-nabī* or *sunnat al-rasūl Allāh*. Thus, the *sunnat al-nabī* or *sunnat al-rasūl Allāh* must be learned and understood by Muslims and taken seriously for they provide additional information and explanation on the revelation. Thus, obedience to the Messenger is essential in order to be obedient to God since only through the explanations of the Messenger do we know how to carry out the demands of revelation.

'Abduh concludes that since obedience to the Messenger is God's command,

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ See Muhammad Muhsin Khan, *The Translation of the Meaning of Sahih al-Bukhari*, (New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 1980), 5th. ed., Vol. 1, hadith no. 604, 345.

following him [i.e., obeying the Messenger] does not deny or contradict the concept of *tawhīd* nor does this make the Messenger the law giver, for the law giver is God alone.²²² Therefore, rendering *tā'ah* to the Messenger is equal to rendering *tā'ah* to God.²²³

Implicitly, as well as significant in the above argument is the idea that Messengers of God were necessary for mankind to receive the true or correct guidance. This is due to the fact that according to the *tawhīdic* understanding, God does not reveal Himself nor His Will in person to humankind but through an "intermediary".²²⁴ The intermediary could be an angel such as Gabriel; or transmission could take place through a certain kind of veil, as in the case of Moses; or through direct inspiration, as in the case of the Prophets Jesus and Muḥammad.²²⁵ In discussing the necessity of the Messengers of God and following their teachings, Rashīd Riḍā as the writer of *Tafsīr al-Manār* uses an argument he attributed to Herbert Spencer who says that,

Nations built their civilisation upon religious values. These religious values, however, become eroded later, although the utilities of some of those values remain in the philosophy of the successive generations. However, when the virtues of these values were no longer respected and opposite values were adopted instead, or when the nation is farther from their religious values, the closer they are to the downfall of their civilisation.²²⁶

‘Abduh argues that obedience to the Messenger is essential if one wants to follow true guidance, since the guidance of the Messenger is from God. When one does not follow the guidance of the Messenger, one is inviting other alternatives which may or may not

²²²Ibid. See also *TAM*, Vol. 4, 427-428.

²²³ See Qur’ān, Sūrah 4 (*al-Nisā*): 80-- He who obeys the Messenger obeys God, but if any turn away, We have not sent thee to watch over their (evil deeds).

²²⁴See Qur’ān Sūrah 42 (*al-Shūrā*): 51-- It is not fitting for a man that God should speak to him except by inspiration (*wahī*), or from behind a veil (*hijāb*), or by the sending of a Messenger to reveal with God's permission what God wills. He is Most High, Most Wise.

²²⁵See *TAYĀ*, n. 4595, 4599 and 4600, 1321.

²²⁶See *TAM*, Vol. 4, 430.

be the correct interpretation of the revelation and thus, may or may not secure the happiness of humankind in this world and the next. The first step towards idolatry, 'Abduh points out, is to think that one is "self-sufficient with regard to one's intelligence and knowledge in dealing with the revelation from God"²²⁷ and therefore concludes wrongly that one does not need the Messenger. "As a result", 'Abduh adds, "one invites corruption to religion in that one shapes religion according to one's own fancy" and not according to the true commands of God.²²⁸ Thus, from the above argument we conclude that it is most appropriate that the phrase "obedience to God and obedience to the Messenger" is combined in this way in the Qur'ān because obedience to God leads to obedience to the Messenger and depicts the logical truth of the situation.

Another question of obedience which 'Abduh attempts to take up is how should the Messenger of God be obeyed? 'Abduh tries to answer this question by explicating verse 4: 80-- "He who obeys the Messenger obeys God. . .".²²⁹ He comments on the verse by saying that what the verse means is that:

[T]he authority of the Messenger of God lies in His Lord. When the Messenger commands or forbids a thing by his *ijtihād*, while there is no indication, whether the command is a directive (*al-irshād*) or a recommendation (*al-istiḥbāb*), and whether the prohibition is due to the disgusting nature of the matter (*al-karāhah*) or a disapproval (*al-istihjān*), it is obligatory to obey him; whether it is a matter of worship/rituals (*al-'ibādat*) or politics (*umūr al-siyāsiyyah*) and judiciary (*al-qada'iyyah*), because he is the leader (*imām*) of the people (*ummah*) and their judge (*ḥākim*). Muslims have reached a consensus (*ajma'a*) that God did not abide by His Messengers upon the mistakes in their *ijtihād*, but made the correct decision in the sight of God known to them [i.e. the Messengers] and forgave them for their inappropriate *ijtihād* (*'adam i'tā' al-ijtihād*) as His words to our Prophet (peace be upon him) when he gave permission

²²⁷Ibid., 428.

²²⁸Ibid., 428.

²²⁹TAM, Vol. 4, 428.

to the Hypocrites when they asked permission not to join [the Prophet] in the Battle of Tabūk (see Qur'ān 9: 43) or as when God censured the Prophet for his *ijtihād* which agrees with the *ijtihād* of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (may God be pleased with him) in accepting ransom for the prisoners of war of the Battle of Badr by His saying (see Qur'ān 8: 67) and also when God censured the Prophet in the incident concerning the blind man seeking guidance as in the beginning of a *sūrah* (see Qur'ān 80: 1-12).²³⁰

In the above passage, 'Abduh argues that the Messenger must be obeyed in all matters of *'ibādah*, politics and judiciary. The Prophet was not just a Prophet, responsible in relation to religious obligations, but also a political leader *cum* judge. His judgements were directly intervened by God whenever he made mistakes. However, with regard to mundane matters, 'Abduh concedes that obedience to the Prophet is not obligatory. 'Abduh reached this conclusion based on the *ḥadīth* regarding the administration of the pollination of palm trees, where the Prophet had given an incorrect opinion at first, after which he admitted his limited knowledge upon the matter and said, " you know best concerning your worldly affairs".²³¹ Thus, although the Prophet is directly guided by

²³⁰Ibid. Translation of the *sūrahs* mentioned in the passage are as follows: *Sūrah* 9 (*al-Tawbah*): 43-- God gave you forgiveness! Why did you grant them exemption before those who told the truth were made clear to you and the liars proven? *Sūrah* 8 (*al-Anfāl*): 67-- It is not fitting for an Apostle that he should have prisoners of war until he has thoroughly subdued the land. You seek for the temporal goods of this world, but God prefers the Hereafter for you and God is Exalted in Might, Wise. *Sūrah* 80 (*'Abasa*): 1-12-- [The Prophet] frowned and turned away, because there came to him the blind man (interrupting). How would you know that perhaps he may be purified (spiritually)? Or that he might receive admonition, and the teaching might profit him? As to the one who regards himself self-sufficient, to him you attend, though it is no blame for you if he does not want to be purified, but as to him who came earnestly and with fear in his heart, of him you are unmindful. By no means [should it be so]! For it is indeed a message of instruction. Therefore let whoso will, keep it in remembrance.

²³¹See *TAM*, Vol. 4, 428. See also *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim bi Sharḥ al-Imām al-Nawwawī*, "Kitāb al-Faḍā'il, Bāb 39- Antum A'lamu bi Amri Dunyākum", (Beirut and Damascus: Al-Dār al-Khayr, 1994), Vol.13, 14, 15, ḥadīth no. 141/2363, 514 henceforth *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. The ḥadīth text reads: The Prophet (peace be upon him) passed by a people who were pollinating (date palms) and he said, " If you do not do this, it will be better [*la ṣaluḥa*]". He [Anas] said that he [the Prophet] went away. [When] he [the Prophet] passed by them [again the next time], he said, "What happen to your dates?" They said, " You said such and such [meaning that you told us not to pollinate the palms]. [The Prophet] replied, " You know best your worldly affair".

God in his saying and actions, and therefore must be obeyed, on mundane matters, one may or may not obey him.²³²

Ṭā'ah to God and His Messenger in Tafsīr al-Azhar

From our previous discussion, it becomes clear that anyone who understands the concept of *tawḥīd* knows that *ṭā'ah* to God is the highest form of obedience. Other forms of obedience stemmed from the obedience to God. As mentioned earlier, in the Qur'ān, *tā'ah* to God is always mentioned simultaneously and in connection with *ṭā'ah* to His Messenger. Hamka, in writing an exegesis to educate the general public makes this clear in *Tafsīr Al-Azhar* by explaining why and how obedience to God is directly related to obedience to His Messenger.

As with most Muslim scholars, Hamka began his presentation by explaining the ideals of the Qur'ān, the yardstick, which all devout Muslims must measure against their actions. In explicating *Sūrah 3 (Āli 'Imrān)*: 31-32, translated as,

Say [O Muḥammad], "If you do love God, follow me [Muḥammad]: God will love you and forgive you your sins: for God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful". Say [O Muḥammad], "Obey God and His Apostle"; but if they turn back, God loves not those who reject faith.²³³

Hamka says that they demonstrate that the correct expression of loving God is by following the example of the Prophet, Muḥammad. According to Hamka,

²³²See *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, ḥadīth no. 140/2362, the text of which reads: "The Prophet of God, peace and blessings be upon him, arrived in Madinah when the people were pollinating date palm trees, some says they were cross-pollinating the date palms. [The Messenger] said: "What are you doing?" They said, "We are artificially inseminating it". [The Messenger] said, "Perhaps, if you don't do that it will be better". So, they abandoned it [cross-pollinating their date palms]. Thus, the flowers fell off or the crops diminished in yield. Then the farmers mentioned this to the Prophet wherefore he said, "Verily, I am a man. When I command you in a matter concerning your religion, hold fast to it; but when I command you of something from my opinion, [remember] that verily I am only a man". . . .

²³³*TAYĀ*, 131.

Here is an answer from God [for those who claim to love Him]. . . [It is as if God is saying], "If indeed you truly love Me, the way to reach Me is simple. . . It is for this reason that I sent My Messenger to you; he is the guide leading to Me". . . But love in speech (*dalam ucapan*) is not enough. Love which is not followed by sacrifice is not enough. To profess love while the desire of the loved one is not fulfilled is false love (*cinta palsu*) . . .

Therefore, the continuation of the verse: "Obey God and obey the Messenger". Thus, obey God and follow the Messenger, you will have certainty that his [the Messenger's] guidance will not lead you to misfortune. When you love someone (*sesuatu*), your wish is that person's wish (*keinginan dia*). Especially loving God, when you love God, your desire will vanish (*fana*) in God's desire . . . Obedience (*taat*) to the Messenger is the result of obedience to God because the Messenger is sent to invite, guide as well as lead the journey [to God] itself. "But if they turn back, God loves not those who reject faith [*kāfirīn*]", (end of verse 32).

Therefore he who claims to love God, but it is not the guidance of Muḥammad that he wants to follow, he is excluded (*tersingkir ke tepi*). He is Maghdhub [Arabic, *maghdūb*], has incurred the wrath of God.

He who tries to invent (*membuat rencana sendiri*), making-up [his own religion] (*memandai-mandai*), he too is excluded. He is Dhallin [Arabic, *Ḍāllīn*], among those who strayed from the right path.²³⁴

There are several observations we can make about Hamka's statement. According to Hamka, this Qur'ānic verse serves as an answer for those who are seeking God but do not know how to reach Him. Hamka insists in accordance with the Qur'ān, that in order to obey God, firstly, one must follow the example or the teaching of the Prophet. If one is to be obedient to God, then, one must be obedient to the Prophet since the Prophet is an agent who conveys the message of God to His servants. Obedience to God and His Apostle without doubt will lead the believer to success in this life and the

²³⁴Hamka, *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, (Singapore: Pustala National Pte. Ltd., 1993) V. 2, 756-758, henceforth cited as TAZ.

next, says Hamka. Secondly, if the believer truly loves God, then, the believer will love what God loves and commands. If the believer refuses to obey God in His command to follow the Messenger, then his or her claim of love towards God is false. Thus, the only means to express one's love of God is by following what He has commanded us to do as He expressed it through the Prophet. Thirdly, those who claim to love God but refuse to follow the Messenger or decided to create their own way of worshipping God will be rejected for not accepting God's guidance for they can never know the way without the assistance of the Prophet of what God wants them to do. Thus, if one follows the way that is taught by the Prophet, God will love him who claims to love God and forgive his sins. Related to the above is *Sūrah 4 (al-Nisā')*: 64-65, which reads:

We sent not an Apostle, but he be obeyed, in accordance with the Will of God. If they had only, when they were unjust to themselves, come unto you [O Muḥammad] and asked God's forgiveness, and the Apostle had asked forgiveness for them, they would have found God indeed Oft-returning, Most Merciful. But no, by your Lord, they can have no (real) faith, until they make you judge in all disputes between them, and find in their souls no resistance against your decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction.²³⁵

Suffice to say, the verses above are similar to the verses of *Sūrah 3 (Āli 'Imrān)*: 31-32, in the sense that they reiterate the importance of rendering obedience to the Messenger of God. While the message of the verses in *Sūrah 3 (Āli 'Imrān)*: 31-32 are about taking God's Messenger as a spiritual guide, the verses of *Sūrah 4 (al-Nisā')*: 64-65, are concerned with accepting God's Messenger as a judge. Therefore, in commenting on the verses above, Hamka gave a rather similar explanation on why the Messenger of

²³⁵TAYA, 199.

God has to be obeyed; namely because, as we have noted earlier, the Messenger of God follows God's command. In addition, he added a few observations among which, is that it is very important to educate the common people about the implication of the above verses on theology and law. He says,

The Messenger is not just to be adored while, his commands and leadership is disobeyed. Those who acknowledge the Messenger but do not follow his teachings are hypocrites. All Messengers of God not just Muḥammad were sent by God to be followed. Those who evade (*mengelak-elak*) [from following the Messenger] or following halfway (*separuh-separuh*), he is outside the path decreed by God (*di luar lingkungan aturan Allah*).

[The verse mentioned that the Messenger is to be obeyed with the will of God or permission of God [Arabic, *bi idhni 'llāh*]. The mentioning of the permission of God (*izin Allah*) is to make clear that obedience to the Messenger is not without condition. The Messenger is obeyed because he executes the command of God. Therefore, obedience to the path (*syariat; Arabic, shari'ah*) of the Messenger means obedience to God. That is the reason that the permission to obey the Messenger is given. Disobedience to the Messenger means disobedience to God . . . Whenever there is a disagreement or dispute, one must seek the judgement of the Messenger . . . to avoid a prolonged dispute which can endanger the unity of the *ummah*. Those who don't want to accept [the judgement of God's Messenger] are without faith.²³⁶

He also added that if they say that they agree with the judgement, but in their heart they hold a grudge or are dissatisfied with the Prophet's judgement, that means that they are still hypocrites (*munafik; Arabic, munāfiqūn*). "This is the belief of the Muslims until the end of time", says Hamka.²³⁷

We can summarize that what Hamka wants to say to his readers is that if one is convinced or have the *īmān* that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God, then one has to

²³⁶TAZ, V. 2, 1294-1296.

²³⁷Ibid., 1296.

prove one's conviction by action, i.e., obeying him as a Messenger of God. The condition of obedience to the Messenger is because one is convinced that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God, and not just because he is Muḥammad bin 'Abd Allāh, a mere mortal as mentioned earlier according to a *hadīth*. This is the theological part of Hamka's message. The other part, which pertains to law is a result of the command of the Qur'ān itself, where the judgement of the Messenger of God is binding upon the Muslims. Therefore, those who consider themselves true Muslims have no choice but to accept all the judgements of the Messenger, because in reality, these are the judgements of God brought by His Messenger. Thus, in fact, even the issues of Islamic law are related to theology.

Hamka also provided a special space for discussing the scope of *ṭā'ah* to the Messenger in *Tafsīr al-Azhar*. In it he says,

The first to be obeyed, is the Qur'ān which has been compiled into a book (*muṣṣḥaf*). It came to us through the Messenger, coming through the mouth of the Messenger. This revelation must be obeyed without condition. Indeed, from the time of the Messenger until now, nobody [no Muslim] has ever said that the Qur'ān is the word of the Messenger, but the word of God.

The second to be obeyed is his [the Messenger's] interpretation through his sunnah upon all the commands of God by that revelation, either his interpretation by speech (*aqwal*; Arabic, *aqwāl*, actions (*af'āal*; Arabic, *af'āl*) or deeds of other people which he knows but did not disapprove (*taqrīr*; Arabic, *taqrīr*).

The third is his opinions, which he himself acknowledges that as a human being, he could make mistakes. For example, when he was considering the strategy for the Battle of Uhud whether to defend Madinah from within the city or to fight outside. His own opinion was to stay within the city but the majority of the people preferred to have a battle in an open space. [The Messenger] abandoned his own opinion and followed the majority.

There was also a similar incident at Badr where the Messenger commanded [his troops] to stop and put up tents at a place far from a water source. Therefore a

companion [of the Messenger] asked whether the decision for the encampment was [the Messenger's] own opinion or as a result of revelation. He [the Messenger] said, "My opinion!" Wherefore, the companion who asked for the explanation said that the place was not suitable for encampment because it is far away from water. It is better to move from there, (and he showed a better place) because the place has a water source whereby if the enemy came [the Muslims] would have already occupied the watering place. The Messenger of followed the opinion of his companion.

With regard to worldly affairs, he himself stated that, "you know best". "You [*kamu*; Arabic, *antum* pl. of *anta*]" here means together. Because of that he [the Messenger] always called for a meeting for discussion [*musyawarat*; Arabic, *mushāwarah*] in such matters although he himself held the leadership . . .

Even so, his companions, for the sake of devotion (*ta'abbud*) copied his personal actions; especially Abdullah bin Umar. It is known that his prayers and his other forms of worships were exactly like the Prophet's in all matters. In fact, even where the Prophet used to stop for shade from the heat [during the day] Ibn Umar too stopped and took shade. Therefore, the *ulama* (Arabic, '*ulamā*') considered such devotion as *mandub* [Arabic, *mandūb*] or *mustahab* [Arabic, *mustahabb*] or *sunnat* [commendable acts].

[The Messenger] usually explained beforehand of his personal likes and dislikes. For example, when Khalid bin Walid brought a dried *dhab* [Arabic, *Dabb*, desert lizard] and offered it to the Prophet, the Prophet mentioned that he personally does not like to eat it but he does not forbid others to eat it. Because of that some *ulama* are of the opinion that eating *dhab* is *makruh* [Arabic, *makrūh*, not commendable].²³⁸

From the above passage we can gather that according to Hamka there are three areas in which obedience to the Messenger is necessary. Firstly, obedience to the word of God, i.e., the Qur'ān which came through the mouth of the Messenger of God. Secondly, obedience to the Sunnah of the Messenger which relates to the interpretation of the Qur'ān, the ways of implementing the commands of God in the Qur'ān. Obedience in these matters is unconditional (*wājib*). Thirdly, and this point can be divided into two

²³⁸Ibid., 1320-1321.

categories, is obedience to the Messenger's personal opinion or *ijtihād*, and following his personal habits and preferences regarding matters not religious in nature. As has been noted, as a human being the Messenger of God made mistakes. Therefore, he always called for meetings or having a *mushāwarah*, says Hamka, to decide on important matters to reduce the possibility of making mistakes, if decision-making did not rest solely on him. We will discuss this important point further in the next chapter. However, in both these categories, whether the Messenger's decision or opinion concerned worldly matters or his personal habits and preferences, one may or may not follow the Messenger. Those who choose to follow the personal habits and preferences of the Messenger do so out of a sense of great love and devotion for him. In addition, the traditional '*ulamā*' considered such devotion commendable since the Prophet is a Messenger of God, a chosen one, guided by God Himself, therefore there couldn't be anything despicable about his personal habits and preferences.

Conclusion

Thus far we have discussed the importance of *tawhīd* and the concept of *ṭā'ah* or obedience to God and His Messenger by comparing the concept of obedience to God and his Messenger in both Muḥammad 'Abduh/Rashīd Riḍā's *Tafsīr al-Manār* and Hamka's *Tafsīr al-Azhar*. Firstly, it should be mentioned that in a discussion of a very basic foundation of Islamic religion such as the topic of *ṭā'ah* to God and His Messenger, one cannot expect to find any discrepancy in points between our *mufasssirs*. In fact, these two commentators complement and confirm each other completely. Secondly, we must reiterate that the concept of obedience resulted from the concept of *tawhīd*. In this chapter we have answered the question why we have to obey God and His Messenger. We find that according to Islamic scholars, obedience to God is a natural consequence of having knowledge about God and about ourselves and

acknowledging Him as the only One to whom worship is due and that He alone is the Creator and Lord of the whole universe. Obedience to God is a result of having the knowledge and understanding that obedience to God in itself is beneficial for and needed by mankind, for it integrates human personality and one becomes at peace with oneself. All this is understood as *īmān*, security with certainty of knowledge. In addition, the scholars have said that it is a natural inclination of humankind to submit to and worship god.

With that understanding and knowledge, the next question to arise was, how to submit, how to realise the act of submission (*islām*), to become *muslim*? It is in order to answer this question that we must obey the Messenger. In other words, obedience to the Messenger is for the purpose of realising total submission to God. Obedience to the Messenger is due not only because God commands mankind to obey him, but also because it is logical to do so, since the Messenger is the one who conveyed and interpreted the command of God. In addition, he himself obeyed the commands of God.

Mankind is forever, at any time and place, obligated to submit to God for his own good. For example, the command of God not to kill fellow human beings, if abandoned, and there were no law to protect innocent lives, is detrimental to all. Therefore, this shows that total obedience to God is necessary. Total obedience to the Messenger however, is only within the scope which is *shar'ī* (religious), which in Islam includes worship and ritual, politics, and judicial matters, and we might also add ethics since ethics is in the consideration of Islamic law that governs the whole system of Islam. Whereas in mundane matters such as those which benefit the people, it is the people themselves who decide together what is best for them so long as they do not transgress the bounds of God. As noted earlier, one may or may not follow the personal habits and preferences of the Messenger, which do not concern religion, although it is

commendable to follow. The problem which arises however, is to decide which area is religious and which is not and that depends on which opinion prevails.

In the next chapter, we will discuss obedience to the *ulū al-amr* (those in authority) and what it entails. Obedience to the *ulū al-amr* is the next logical step to be discussed because the Messenger of God was not only a Prophet, but he was also a leader of his community. Therefore, it is important to see what *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar* have to say about obedience to leadership as stated in *Sūrah (al-Nisā')* 4:59.

CHAPTER FOUR

Tā'ah to the Ulū al-Amr

Introduction

Obedience or *tā'ah* to the *ulū al-amr* in the *tafāsīr* is discussed alongside the verses below.

Verily God commands all of you [*ya'murukum*] to deliver what you have been entrusted with [*tu'addū l-amānāti*], to whom they are due; and when you judge between people, judge with justice; how excellent is the teaching that He has given you! For God hears and sees all things.

O you who believe! Obey God, and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority (*ulī al-amr* [genitive form]) among you. If you differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to God and His Messenger if you do believe in God and the Last Day; that is the best, and most suitable for final determination.

[*Sūrah* 4 (*al-Nisā*): 58-59]

Mufasssirūn (sg. *mufasssir*, Qur'ānic exegete) without doubt consider the above verses two of the most important on Islamic politics.²³⁹ In the general sense, the message in verse 58, above, is God's command to all mankind to deliver their *amānāt* or what they have been entrusted with, i.e., to be responsible, to do their job honestly and as best as they can, and to fulfil the requirement of justice. It is significant to note that the occurrence of the word *amānāt* is in the plural (the plural of *amānah*),²⁴⁰ indicating that

²³⁹See Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Fakhr al-Rāzī* also known as *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1994), Vol. 5, Juz' 10, 148; henceforth cited as *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*. See also *TAM*, Vol. 5, 168. See also *TAZ*, Vol. 2, 1285. See also Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq al-Tanzīl wa 'Uyūn al-Ta'wīl*, (n.p.: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.), Vol. 1, 535; henceforth cited as *Al-Kashshāf*.

²⁴⁰The root meaning of *amānah* includes the sense of tranquility in heart and mind, become secure or free from fear. *Amānah* is translated as trust, trustiness, trustworthiness, trustfulness faithfulness and fidelity; see Edward William Lane, *Arabic English Lexicon*, (Lahore: Islamic Book Centre, 1982), Vol. 1, Bk. 1, Pt. 1, 100-102.

amānāt is a wider concept which includes "such other themes as government itself which is an *amānah*, and so is giving testimony, taking care of orphans, or of the *waqf* (charitable endowment or trust for the advancement of a good cause) property and so on".²⁴¹ That the reference to *amānāt* in the said verse is followed by reference to justice implies that justice is one of the most important of all *amānāt*.²⁴² The next verse, which is specifically addressed to Muslims, commands obedience to God and obedience to the Messenger as well as to the *ulū al-amr*. There are many things said in the *tafāsīr* about these two verses besides what is obvious. For example, verse 58 implies the existence of a civilized and organized social and political *milieu*; and verse 59 implies that a kind of consultation exists among the people since it commands the people to refer to God and His Messenger when they disagree. This can avoid disagreement that might cause a split in the community.²⁴³ Muslims have concluded that with the demise of the Prophet, "referring to God and His Messenger" means to refer to the Qur'ān and Sunnah. In the specific sense both the verses taken together imply a contract between the rulers and the ruled. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d.1210 C.E.) says:

Just as God commands the leaders and administrators to be just, He also commands the masses to obey the administrators. It is in this regard that 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib [the fourth caliph] may God be pleased with him, said, "It is the obligation of the *Imām* to judge with justice and to deliver what have been entrusted to him (*yu'addī al-amānah*); if he does this, then it is obligatory upon the masses to listen and to obey".²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Freedom, Equality and Justice in Islam*, (Malaysia and UK: Ilmiah Publishers and The Islamic Foundation, 1999) 154.

²⁴² *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, Vol. 5, Juz' 10, 146.

²⁴³ See Ibid. Fazlur Rahman, "Islam and Political Action: Politics in the Service of Religion", in Nigel Biggar, Jamie S. Scott, and William Schweiker, *Cities of Gods*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 19), 154; henceforth cited as "Islam and Political Action".

²⁴⁴ *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, Vol. 5, Juz' 10, 148.

The important point in this contract is the condition that the ruler must be just and deliver his *amānah* (towards his subjects. Only then are the masses obligated to obey the ruler. One of the *amānāt* of the ruler is to be just; hence, the insistence on '*adālah* (moral and religious probity) as one of the most important criteria of a ruler.²⁴⁵ Justice or '*adl*, as all Muslim scholars insist, is "putting things in their rightful place", i.e., doing the right thing.²⁴⁶ It also means "according equal treatment to others or reaching a state of equilibrium in transaction with them (*al-taswiyah fī al-mu'āmalah*)",²⁴⁷ and '*adl* also "signifies a sense of moral rectitude and fairness in that things should be where they ought to be.²⁴⁸ However, since al-Ghazzālī, jurists or political theorists disregarded the quality of justice, having to choose between authoritarian rule and anarchy, they chose authoritarian rule.²⁴⁹ Justice is one of the most fundamental aspects of Islam that the Qur'ān demands from mankind, especially the believers, even if it is against themselves and their kin, since justice is part of godliness and a very important aspect of *tawhīd*.²⁵⁰ It is equal to *amr ma'rūf nahy munkar* (enjoining good

245See 'Alī b. Muḥammad Ḥabīb al-Baṣrī al-Māwardī, *Al-Aḥkām Al-Sultānīyyah wa Al-Wilāyāt al-Dīnīyyah*, (Al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Fikr, 1983), 6; henceforth cited as *Al-Aḥkām Al-Sultānīyyah*.

246Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: ABIM, 1978), 71; 73. See also Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Freedom, Equality and Justice in Islam* (Malaysia and UK: Ilmiah Publishers and The Islamic Foundation, 1999) 140.

247Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Freedom, Equality and Justice in Islam*, 140.

248Ibid., 140.

249See E. I. J. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 42-43; and Ann K. S. Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 116-117 on their comment of al-Ghazzali.

250See Qur'ān 5: 9-- O you who believe! Stand out firmly for God as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just, that is next to piety (*taqwā*) and fear God. For God is well-acquainted with all that you do. Also 6: 152-- . . . Whenever you speak, speak justly even if a near relative is concerned; and fulfill the covenant of God. Thus does He command you that you may remember.

and forbidding evil) which is commanded by numerous verses in the Qur'ān.²⁵¹ Therefore, the discussion of *tā'ah* to the *ulū al-amr* is related to *tawhīd* as well as politics.

Our concern in this chapter is to discuss *tā'ah* to the *ulū al-amr* and its scope according to *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, taking into consideration the classical opinions. Our concern is also more on the '*aqīdah*' aspect where the force of Islamic practice lies, rather than on politics *per se*. The emphasis on '*aqīdah*' is due the fact that correct '*aqīdah*' should produce correct action. Many Muslim scholars hope that greater exposure of all Muslims towards their '*aqīdah*', or in other words knowing and accepting that obedience to the *ulū al-amr* is part of '*aqīdah*' will change their behaviour in positive ways. Before proceeding to discuss obedience to the *ulū al-amr* in general, we shall discuss that category itself.

Ulū al-Amr

The term *ulū al-amr* is one of those special terms, a plural noun without a singular.²⁵² Its literal meaning is possessors of command. Reflecting upon past Islamic practices and considering what was written by scholars in the past concerning the *ulū al-amr*, *Tafsīr al-Manār* responds:

Some claimed that [*the ulū al-amr*] were the rulers or princes (*al-umarā'*) and that obedience to them was conditional, [i.e., obedience was to be rendered to them] as long

²⁵¹See for example Qur'ān 3:104-- Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong. They are the ones who will attain felicity; and 3: 113-114-- Not all of them are alike, of the People of the Book are a portion that are righteous. They rehearse the signs of God all night long and they prostrate themselves. They believe in God and the Last Day. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, and they hasten in good works. They are in the rank of the righteous.

as they did not command what is forbidden [by the *sharī'ah*] . . . This was based on the *ḥadīth*, "There is no obedience in matters involving disobedience to God or His displeasure" and "Verily, obedience is obligatory only in what is good". Others applied the term *ulū al-amr* to the judges and therefore making it obligatory to render obedience to every judge; [in doing this], they have neglected the term "among you" [used by the Qur'ān] . . . There are others who say that the [*ulū al-amr*] were the '*ulamā*' but the '*ulamā*' differ in their opinions . . . and therefore [there is a problem of] who should be obeyed or disobeyed . . . According to the *Shī'ah*, the *ulū al-amr* were the infallible *imāms*. This is rejected because there is no proof of infallibility . . .253

What can be discerned from the above quotation and also from referring to *tafāsīr* by Zamakhsharī and al-Rāzī, is that some *mufasssīrūn* of old tended to classify *ulū al-amr* as exclusively the rulers or sultans, some considered only the military leaders as *ulū al-amr*, others only the scholars or the judges, and even the infallible *imām* according to the *Shī'ah*. Other opinions are: the *Khulafā' al-Rāshidīn* (the rightly guided caliphs), *ijmā' al-ṣaḥābah* (consensus of the Prophet's companions), the members of 'Umar al-Khaṭṭāb's consultation committee and military expedition commanders. All, at various times, have been considered *ulū al-amr*.254 However in general, opinion has been that rulers such as princes and sultans, and the scholars, are the *ulū al-amr*, although Zamakhsharī rejects tyrannical leadership as *ulū al-amr*.255

Returning to *Tafsīr al-Manār* comment concerning who is the *ulū al-amr* in the classical *tafāsīr*, we can gather another meaning from those opinions, that is that *ulū al-amr* are groups of people who have authority or expertise over their respective field. 'Abdul Ḥamīd Ṣiddīqī a commentator on *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, aptly comments:

252 *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, Vol. 5, Juz' 10, 158.

253 *TAM*, Vol. 5, 180-181. The *ḥadīth* mentioned in the quotation can be found in *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, "Kitāb al-Imārah", Vol. 10, 11, 12, *ḥadīth* no. 39, 539.

254 *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, Vol. 5, Juz' 10, 158. See *Al-Kashshāf*, Vol. 1, 535-536.

Ulū al-amr is a term of much wider connotation than is commonly supposed. Ordinarily, this term signifies those who run the affairs of the State. In the Sharī'ah, however, the term *ulū al-amr* includes all those leaders of the Muslim society who control and administer its affairs, may they be leaders of thought or literature, religious divines, political leaders, administrators, judges, commanders or chiefs of social, cultural, tribal municipal or local organizations.²⁵⁶

Tafsīr al-Manār itself is of the opinion that *ulū al-amr* refers to the people who handle the affairs of the ummah (*aṣḥāb amr al-ummah*).²⁵⁷ Grammatically, this seems more appropriate because the word *ulū al-amr* denotes a plural noun referring to a group of people. It also tallies with what is indicated by the Qur'ān, that *ulū al-amr* should be from among the people –“*ulū al-amr minkum*” Hence, the term should not be used for one single ruler or a military commander.

In this chapter we will discuss *ṭā'ah* to the two groups generally considered the *ulū al-amr* in the *tafāsīr*, i.e., those with political authority, the rulers, and the scholars. This is because these two do influence the lives of the Muslims. First, we shall discuss *ṭā'ah* to the rulers.

Ṭā'ah to the ulū al-Amr

The fact that Islam is inseparable from politics is no longer a surprise. Apart from the numerous verses of the Qur'ān and *aḥādīth* which can be quoted as proofs of this

²⁵⁵Ibid.

²⁵⁶See note 2305 in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, (Rendered into English by 'Abdul Ḥamīd Ṣiddīqī with explanatory notes and brief biographical sketches of major narrators), (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1976), Vol. 3, 1023 (henceforth cited as Ṣiddīqī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*).

²⁵⁷*TAM*, Vol. 5, 188.

statement, there exists a variety of historical evidence which supports this idea. Even the first schism in Islam, the "Khawārij incident", though political in nature, has a grave theological impact.²⁵⁸ The reason that Islam and politics, and other aspects of life, are inseparable is due to the concept of *tawḥīd* itself. The implication behind *tawḥīd*, that God is omniscient, omnipresent, all-powerful, all-seeing and all-hearing and that He demands beauty, truth, and justice, makes Islam a system of moral-social order an ideal to be pursued always--hence the concepts of *taqwā* and *jihād*.²⁵⁹ On the practical level, Islam is also a force for social reform, which calls for helping the socio-economically weak and depressed classes. For example, it imposes *zakāt* on the rich to alleviate the condition of the poor, improves the defence effort and other social services, allots shares in inheritance to women, regulates marriage and divorce, regulates Islamic penal code and so on. To do this, it needs a state to carry out its program. The relationship of the state to Islam as a religion is that the state is an instrument which serves the religion.²⁶⁰ Without a state or more accurately political power, it is almost impossible to live fully an Islamic way of life as most practising Muslims who live under secular government know. According to Ibn Taymīyyah, "the administration of the affairs of men [or the state] is one of the greatest obligations of religion; [in fact,] religion cannot exist without it".²⁶¹

258For references to the Khawārij and other schisms in Islam and their doctrines, see Abū Maṣṣūr 'Abd al-Qāhir b. Ṭāhir al-Baghdādī, *Al-Farq Bain al-Firaq* (trans. by Kate Chambers Seelye), (New York: Ams Press Inc., 1966), Chapter. 2, 75-76. See also W.M.Watt, *Islamic Political Thought*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1980 paperback edition), 54-55.

259See Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes*, Chapter 2-3, 16-64. See also Ismā'īl al-Farūqī, *Tawḥīd*, Chapter 1, 6, and 7; 1-16, 61-102.

260Fazlur Rahman, "Islam and Political Action", 154.

261Quoted by Qamaruddin Khan, *The Political Thought of Ibn Taymīyyah*, (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1973), 29.

Thus, to return to the discussion of *tā'ah* to the *ulū al-amr*, not only does the Qur'ān abound in numerous verses concerning politics, such as the verses mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, but the *ahadīth* too are so plentiful with political sayings that they have their own section under the title *Kitāb al-Imārah* or *Kitāb al-Aḥkām* (The book of Government). For example the *hadīth* which says:

Are you not all guardians (*rā'in*) and responsible for your charges? A ruler is a guardian and is responsible for his subjects. A man is a guardian of his family and responsible for his charges. A woman is guardian of the members of her husband's household and his children and responsible for her charges. A servant is a guardian of his master's property and is responsible for his charges. Therefore, are you not all guardians and responsible for your charges? 262

According to authoritative opinion, obedience or *tā'ah* to the *ulū al-amr* is obligatory because the command of God to obey the *ulū al-amr* is explicit and definitive (*'alā sabīl al-jazm wa al-qat'*).²⁶³ As we have mentioned earlier, however, unlike obedience to God and His Messenger, obedience to the *ulū al-amr* is conditional, the condition being the ability of the latter to deliver *amānāt* and carry out justice. In fact, justice can be considered part of the *amānāt*. This is the reason why most political theorists maintained justice to be one of the criteria in determining the eligibility of the ruler.²⁶⁴ According to al-Bāqillānī, one of the circumstances that may lead to forfeiture of leadership or *imāmah* is injustice, i.e., loss of religious or moral probity.²⁶⁵ However, the licence given by the Qur'ān for the right of the *ulū al-amr* to be obeyed has been

262Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī bi Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, (Cairo: Dār al-Rayyān li al-Turāth, 1987), Vol. 13, "Kitāb al-Aḥkām", ḥadīth no. 7138, 119.

263*Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, Vol. 5, Juz' 10, 149.

264Al-Māwardī, *Al-Aḥkām Al-Sulṭānīyyah*, 6; *Al-Kashshāf*, Vol. 1, 535; *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, Vol. 5, Juz' 10, 149; Ann K. S. Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) 24, 89.

265Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, 24, 74, 89,

much abused. As a result, and as history has testified, the Islamic world for the most part has been ruled by too many tyrannical absolute monarchies. Ibn Taymīyyah, seemingly possessed with the idea of the necessity of authority, gives credence to the sayings that "the sovereign is the shadow of God on earth" and "sixty years of rule under a tyrant *imām* is better than a night without an *imām*" in his *Al-Siyāsah al-Shar'īyyah*.²⁶⁶ (We shall discuss later the problem of the role of the scholars in perpetuating certain ideas, in a section on obedience to scholars). The *ḥadīth* literature too is full of contradictory *aḥādīth* concerning obedience to the leadership. For example compare the few *aḥādīth* we have selected below:

1. It has been narrated on the authority of Ibn 'Umar that the Holy Prophet (may peace be upon him) said: It is obligatory upon a Muslim that he should listen (to the ruler appointed over him) and obey him whether he likes it or not, except that he is ordered to do a sinful thing. If he is ordered to do a sinful act, a Muslim should neither listen nor should he obey his orders.²⁶⁷

2. It has been narrated through a different chain of transmitters, on the authority of Ḥudhaifa b. al-Yamān who said: Messenger of Allah, no doubt, we had an evil time (i.e., the days of Jāhiliyya) and God brought us a good time (i.e., the Islamic period) through which we are now living. Will there be a bad time after this good time? He (the Holy Prophet) said: Yes. I said: Will there be a good time after this bad time? He said: Yes. I said: Will there be a bad time after a good time? He said: Yes. I said: How? Whereupon he said: There will be leaders who will not be led by my guidance and who will not adopt my ways. There will be among them men who will have the hearts of devils in the bodies of human beings. I said: What should I do, Messenger of Allah, if I (happen) to live in that time? He replied: You will listen to the Amīr and

²⁶⁶Khan, *The Political Thought of Ibn Taymīyyah*, 32. See also Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, Chapter 4--on similar themes, concerning the abuses of the Umayyads and Abbasids, 46-47.

²⁶⁷Ṣiddīqī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Vol. 3, ḥadīth no. 4533, 1022.

carry out his orders; even if your back is flogged and your wealth is snatched, you should listen and obey. 268

3. . . . Whoever amongst you should see something abominable should change it with his hand; and if he has not the strength to do it, he should do it with his tongue, and if he cannot even do this he should abhor it in his heart, and that is the least of faith.²⁶⁹

4. It has been narrated on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās that the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) said: One who found in his Amīr something which he disliked should hold his patience, for one who separated from the main body of the Muslims even at the extent of a handspan and died, would die the death of one belonging to the days of Jāhiliyya.²⁷⁰

We can find many more contradictory *aḥādīth* but the above suffice for our purpose. There are many things that have been said to justify those *aḥādīth*. For example, obedience to the ruler is absolutely necessary for the sake of order and security or that the *aḥādīth* must be understood holistically or within proper context. While it seems that justifications for obedience to unjust rulers can be found in religious texts such as the *ḥadīth* literature, there is also another point of view mentioned by Ṣiddīqī, that according to Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ in his book *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, Abū Hanīfa is of the opinion that a tyrant ruler is not only invalid or unacceptable by law but a revolt can be raised against him.²⁷¹ Al-Jāḥiẓ (776-868/9 C. E.) is also of this opinion.²⁷² With regard to rebellion against the government, Fazlur Rahman comments, "it must not be imagined that protest or rebellion is never allowed. Indeed, according to the Qur'ān, all Messengers after Noah were rebels against the established order".²⁷³ He adds that the

268Ibid., ḥadīth no. 4554, 1029.

269Ibid., Vol. 1, ḥadīth no. 79, 33.

270Ibid., Vol. 3, ḥadīth no. 4559, 1030.

271Ibid., Vol. 3, note 2305.

272See Lambton, 63.

273Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes*, 44.

criterion for protest or rebellion according to the Qur'ān is "'corruption on the earth' (*fasād fī l-arḍ*) which can mean any state of affairs that leads to general lawlessness--political, moral, or social--when national or international affairs are out of control".²⁷⁴ He also says, "Islam itself. . . was a rebellion against the *status quo* in 7th-century Arabia . . . then spread throughout the Arabian peninsular and beyond".²⁷⁵

Anyway, most scholars agree that Islamic political theories are contradictory. Rosenthal noted that Muslim jurists or political theorists were at odds trying to justify the inconsistent theory of governments and rule in Islam.²⁷⁶ Fazlur Rahman comments:

the common view among Sunni theoreticians is that the *imām* may be elected by one person and then the rest of the community must follow suit by swearing its allegiance (*bay'ah*) to him. . . . But while in theory they insisted on the principle of election, they nevertheless came to believe, in the course of time, that a person who actually seizes power and uses it effectively is legitimate in the eyes of Islam. In fact, the seizure of power on the part of a strong person, say a military commander, is *ipso facto*, the proof of his legitimacy. It is for this reason, namely that the Muslims were unable to elaborate any satisfactory theory of government and rule, that we find today throughout the Muslim world . . . strong-men rulers, be they kings, military dictators or religious autocrats. ²⁷⁷

Other critics say that "the 'real Caliphate' or valid rulers of the Muslims lasted for only thirty years after the death of the Prophet; what prevailed for the best part of Islamic history was a fictitious caliphate sustained by sheer force". ²⁷⁸ What happened and

²⁷⁴Ibid.

²⁷⁵Fazlur Rahman, "The Law of Rebellion in Islam", in *Islam in the Modern World*, (1983 Paine Lectures in Religion), ed. by Jill Raitt, University of Missouri, Columbia. 1.

²⁷⁶Rosenthal, 33.

²⁷⁷Fazlur Rahman, "The Law of Rebellion in Islam", 6-7.

²⁷⁸Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982), 56.

what is still happening in most of the Islamic world is: the Qur'ānic teaching does not tally with Muslim practice. The reason according to one scholar is :

[T]he structure [of the state] that took shape under the prophet . . . extended by the early caliphs . . . for its time and place is remarkably modern. . . . In a way the failure of the early community, the relapse into pre-Islamic principles of social organisation, is an added proof of the modernity of the early experiment. It was too modern to succeed. The necessary social infrastructure did not yet exist to sustain it. 279

The purpose of discussing *tā'ah* to the *ulū al-amr* in this chapter is firstly to determine the scope of *tā'ah* to clarify the confusion about the nature of obedience to the ruler and to resolve the issue of obedience to the ruler by looking at the standpoint of *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar*. We feel that the confusion about obedience to the ruler was deliberately created by people with special interest in leadership, normally for the purpose of self-aggrandisement and hegemony. It is up to the Muslims to understand their '*aqīdah tawhīd* and fully practice it, and to bear in mind that the question of obedience to the ruler is not simply politics but has a moral-ethical implication which determines one's correct belief (*tawhīd*) or incorrect belief (*kufr*).²⁸⁰ Secondly, we wish to emphasize Islamic modernist ideas about *tā'ah* and the *ulū al-amr* which are more suitable and appropriate for the present time as well as having roots in the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

279Robert N. Bellah, "Islamic Tradition and the Problem of Modernization" in *Beyond Belief*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 150-151 quoted by Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam, Doktrin dan Peradaban* (Jakarta: Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina, 1992), 571.

280See Lambton, 62-63-- in the discussion on al-Jāhiz's affirmation on the doctrine of the duty to resist impious government.

***Tā'ah* according to *Tafsīr al-Manār*: the political leadership**

In *Tafsīr al-Manār* the word *ulū al-amr* is used synonymously with *ahl al-ḥall wa al-'aqd*. This idea was borrowed by 'Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā from al-Rāzī.²⁸¹ Al-Rāzī's original idea is that the *ulū al-amr* is the *ijmā' al-ummah* (consensus of the community). However, in the final analysis, he decided that *ulū al-amr* is the *ijmā' ahl al-ḥall wa al-'aqd* (literally, consensus of those who loose and bind, i.e., those whose decisions count) among the Muslims. His arguments for these arrangements are, "since the obligation to obey the *ulū al-amr* is definitive (*qaṭ'an*)", the object of obedience "must be infallible (*ma'ṣūm*)".²⁸² He also says that this infallibility can be attained only if the agreement of the whole *ummah* is achieved.²⁸³ However, since the system at the time was incapable of reaching the people and taking benefit from them, the *ahl al-ḥall wa al-'aqd* of the *ummah* becomes the *ulū al-amr*.²⁸⁴

When al-Rāzī said that infallibility can be attained only by the agreement of the *ummah*, he was actually explaining the meaning of the famous *ḥadīth* "my community will not agree upon an error". We can now speculate that when the Prophet said those words, he had in mind that at least a section of the *ummah* is incorruptible and would fight for the truth and justice which he had commanded. This is because it would be impossible for the whole *ummah* to agree on a mistake compared to a few individuals considering that everyone has an opinion of their own.²⁸⁵ As for the Muslim *ummah*, they were not even consulted concerning who should be their leader after the last

²⁸¹See *TAM*, Vol. 5, 181.

²⁸²*Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, Vol. 5, Juz' 10, 149.

²⁸³Ibid.

²⁸⁴Ibid., 150.

²⁸⁵See *TAM*, Vol. 4, 199.

Khulafā' al-Rāshidūn (Rightly-Guided Caliph) but were bribed and threatened to accept a leader imposed on them.²⁸⁶

Returning to the discussion of the *ummah* as the *ulū al-amr* by al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Manār* took up this idea and agreeing that participation of the whole *ummah* is a difficult matter, expands al-Rāzī's idea and make it its own:

The *ahl al-ḥall wa al-'aqd* are leading personalities (*khawāṣṣ*) of the people (*ummah*) from among the scholars, military leaders and those of general affairs such as those in business, industry, and agriculture, as well as heads of labourers and [political?] parties, directors of respectable newspapers and their chief editors. They are the *ulū al-amr* to whom obedience is rendered in what is agreed upon, because the common people and the masses followed them in satisfaction and willingness, and because [the *ahl al-ḥall wa al-'aqd*] are knowledgeable of the welfare of the people with regard to the *sharī'ah*. Their meeting together and agreement are also to be easily accomplished [because of their knowledge and accessibility to meet together]. Due to these factors [i.e. their knowledge, their understanding of the need of the people, their ability to decide and meet together], their consensus is considered the consensus of the people.²⁸⁷

At this point it is worth noting that the idea taken up and expanded by *Tafsīr al-Manār* above is a great advance on the views of Muslim political theorists who did not clearly define the *ahl al-ḥall wa al-'aqd* except to say that they were the electors (*ahl al-ikhtiyār*) of the *imām* (leader) of the Muslim community.²⁸⁸ After reading al-Māwārdī, Rosenthal or any works on Muslim politics or political history, we could imagine that this *ahl al-ḥall wa al-'aqd* or the *ahl al-ikhtiyār* might even be those tyrannical usurpers who want to justify their usurpation or to enthrone a puppet caliph. The *ahl al-ḥall wa al-'aqd* of *Tafsīr al-Manār* on the other hand, is a group of people who are

²⁸⁶See Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates* (London and New York: Longman Group Ltd., 1986), 88-89. See also *TAM*, Vol. 5, 188. See also Lambton, 66.

²⁸⁷*TAM*, Vol. 5, 187.

²⁸⁸See al-Māwārdī, *Al-Aḥkām Al-Sulṭānīyyah*, 6.

concerned with the welfare of the people. They are people whom the masses rely upon for the running of their affairs. The *ahl al-ḥall wa al-'aqd* are willingly obeyed by the people in the decision that they have agreed upon. They are knowledgeable in the affairs of the people. They meet together whenever they want to decide the welfare of the Muslim community. They are considered the representative of the people and the leader of the people.

All this is in stark contrast to what Muslims were used to, compared with, for example, al-Māwardī's (d. 1031) treatment of the *ahl al-ḥall wa al-'aqd* as electors of the *imām* of the Muslim community as already noted. There are several views on this issue as mentioned by al-Māwardī. One is that even a single elector was sufficient to elect an *imām*, with the election considered valid. Another was that there should be as many electors as possible so that the election would become a consensus of the *ummah*. This, however, is rejected by al-Māwardī because there was no precedent in history. Another view was that there should be five electors, following the example set by 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb; still another considered three electors sufficient.²⁸⁹ How the election was to be conducted was not mentioned.

Tafsīr al-Manār made an additional important point about what constitutes a valid reason to render obedience to the *ulū al-amr*:

When the *ahl al-ḥall wa al-'aqd* agree upon a matter of public affair in which there is no text (*naṣṣ*) from the *Sharī'ah*, reaching their decision freely without being compelled by anyone or other authority, obedience to them is obligatory without condition . . .²⁹⁰

There are two points being made in the statement above. The first is that it is understood that the *ahl al-ḥall wa al-'aqd* cannot change that which has been covered

²⁸⁹Ibid., 6-7.

²⁹⁰*TAM*, Vol. 5, 181.

explicitly and detailed by the Qur'ān and Sunnah, which means that the *ahl al-ḥall wa al-'aqd* are bound by the *Shari'ah*. Their decisions are effective only concerning public affairs and temporal matters (*al-maṣāliḥ al-dunyawiyyah*) under the guidance of the *Shari'ah*, for example in matters of war and peace or how to implement the laws of the *Shari'ah* itself among others. Second, and most importantly, is that they are to reach their decision without being compelled by any one. This would be a true consensus in addition to being a legitimate criterion for procuring unconditional obedience. An interesting addition by *Tafsīr al-Manār* which caused some to accuse its proponents of following everything western is the idea of representative government. It says,

It is obligatory for the government officials (*al-ḥukkām*) to govern and carry out that which has been decided upon by the *ulū al-amr* [here, is meant the representative of the people]. The Islamic State is comprised of . . . three bodies: 1. a body which explains and discusses the laws comparable to what is today known as the legislative (*al-hai'ah al-tashri'iyyah*), 2. a ruling and executive body known as the executive (*al-hai'ah al-tanfidiyyah*), and 3. the judiciary (*jamā'ah al-muḥakkimīn*).²⁹¹

While it can be said that the three government bodies mentioned above are commonly acceptable at present, the more noteworthy statement, that “it is obligatory for the government officials (*al-ḥukkām*) to govern and carry out that which has been decided upon by the *ulū al-amr*” is new to many modern Muslim countries. This is because there is usually one single ruler, a monarch or a dictator who governs a country and considered himself the government. The government officials work for that ruler instead of for the *ulū al-amr* who represent the people or for the government in the real sense. In this sense *Tafsīr al-Manār* has captured the reality of the situation in Muslim government which prevails until today.

²⁹¹Ibid., 187-188.

Tafsīr al-Manār tries to adapt western systems into the Islamic ones where it is adaptable. We shall see that this adaptation is not totally discordant with Islam, according to *Tafsīr al-Manār*, which argues,

It is obligatory for the *ummah* to accept the decision [of the *ulū al-amr*, the representative of the *ummah*] since the decision does not involve submission to a single person, nor does [the acceptance of the decision] go outside the realm of *tawhīd* . . . since the State will not apply except the judgement of God and His Messenger and that which is derived by the *ahl al-ḥall wa al-'aqd* among the knowledgeable and experienced of the *ummah* ... There will be no agreement accept for the betterment and welfare of the *ummah* .292

Thus, the seemingly secular idea of *Tafsīr al-Manār* is not secular at all but rather Islamic. The state proposed by *Tafsīr al-Manār* lives not by the rule of the majority but the rule of the *sharī'ah*. The *ummah* is obeying itself by way of obeying its own representatives. Obedience to the *ulū al-amr* in this case is obedience to the will of the people, which is guided by the *sharī'ah* in the realm of worldly affairs. A more important addition made by *Tafsīr al-Manār* is that, when the *ulū al-amr* who represent the people agree upon a decision, the decision becomes a true consensus (*al-ijmā' al-ḥaqīqī*) which is counted in the principles of jurisprudence.²⁹³ As we can see, the *tafsīr's* discussion of the *ulū al-amr* has already inevitably included the discussion of *shūrā* or consultation. However, there are still a few things to be said about this.

²⁹²Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid., 190.

Shūrā

An oft-repeated saying of some scholars, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, that the Prophet "left no detailed political theory or institutions empowered to develop one"²⁹⁴ seems like a misguided statement. It has also been said that the statement was a conclusion by scholars for some time, to justify the adoption of different political principles in choosing the head of state by the immediate successors of the Prophet. Overall, the Sunni school of thought still maintains election and designation as the only valid criteria in appointing a caliph, as mentioned by al-Māwardī.²⁹⁵ Al-Māwardī and al-Baghdādī (d. 1037), for example, maintained that the *imām* or caliph has to be elected although, as we have mentioned, how the election is to be conducted is not explained.²⁹⁶ However, since the election and designation processes practised by the early Islamic community are well known among Muslims, we assume the election they had in mind is that which took place during the incident of *Saqīfah Banī Sā'idah* (Courtyard or Hall of the Sā'idah clan), where Abū Bakr nominated 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb and Abū 'Ubaydah b. al-Jarrāḥ after explaining why the leader of the new Muslim community must be a Qurayshite. 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, thereafter, nominated Abū Bakr, proclaimed Abū Bakr's suitability to be the leader, and swore allegiance to him. The *Muhājirūn* (the Meccan immigrants) and the *Anṣār* (the Medinan helpers) followed suit after being convinced by 'Umar's argument, and thus successfully dissolved their prior division and differences, i.e., the *Anṣār's* separatist idea.²⁹⁷ Alternatively, there was election by consultation of the six members of 'Umar's consultation committee, to choose among themselves one who is most suitable to be the

²⁹⁴Tamara Sonn, 311. See also Qamaruddin Khan, *The Political Thought of Ibn Taymīyyah*, (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1973), 23.

²⁹⁵See al-Māwardī, *Al-Aḥkām Al-Sulṭānīyyah*, 6.

²⁹⁶See Rosenthal, 28, 30. See also Fazlur Rahman, "The Law of Rebellion in Islam", 6-7.

²⁹⁷See Husein Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad* (trans. by Ismā'il Rājī al-Fārūqī), (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 1993, Malaysian ed.), 508-510. See also Hugh Kennedy, 51-53.

successor of 'Umar. In this case they chose 'Uthmān b. 'Affān to be the third caliph.²⁹⁸ In this election, 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Auf, one of the member of the election committee, acted as the poll surveyor during the final contest between 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and 'Uthmān b. 'Affān.²⁹⁹

Another valid method for the appointment of a caliph mentioned by al-Māwardī is by designation. What is meant by this is, first, the designation of 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb by Abū Bakr as the latter's successor and the acceptance of the community of 'Umar's appointment. Second, al-Māwardī considers that 'Umar's action of appointing the committee to choose one of its members as caliph can be accounted as an act of designation as well as election.³⁰⁰

The idea that the Prophet left no detailed political theory or institutions to develop an Islamic one is due to misunderstanding of Islam as a result of not approaching the Islamic sources holistically (which presently, contemporary Muslim scholars are trying to address through their programmes on Islamisation of knowledge).³⁰¹ While it is true that the Prophet did not leave a specific way of governance, he left the Qur'ān which abounds with references to political organisation. Apart from the two verses quoted at the beginning of this chapter, there are others that call for consultations, justice, fairness, mutual goodwill, and co-operation.³⁰² Most importantly, the Prophet left the institution of *shūrā* (consultation), that democratic principle of decision-making of the Arab tribes (which is confirmed by the Qur'ān), to which the community referred immediately after the Prophet's death even before his

²⁹⁸See al-Māwardī, *Al-Aḥkām Al-Sulṭānīyyah*, 6-7.

²⁹⁹See Hamka, *Sejarah Umat Islam* [History of the Islamic People], (new ed.), (Singapore: Pustaka Nasional Pte. Ltd, 1997) 226-229.

³⁰⁰See al-Māwardī, *Al-Aḥkām Al-Sulṭānīyyah*, 6-7.

³⁰¹See 'Abdulḥamīd Abūsulaymān (ed.), *Islamization of Knowledge* (trans. of Islāmīyyah al-Ma'rifah), (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989) 23-53.

³⁰²See Qur'ān 3:159, 42: 38, 4:135, 5: 42, 90: 17, 103:3, 5: 2; etc.

funeral, as depicted in the famous incident of *Saqīfah Banī Sā'idah*.³⁰³ The *Saqīfah Banī Sā'idah* itself shows that *shūrā* was working well then. The problem is that this is the only time we hear of *shūrā* being implemented after the death of the Prophet. According to Fazlur Rahman,

Very early on in Islamic history, the concept of *shūrā* has been distorted. Instead of being taken as a principle by which the community itself makes decisions through mutual discussion and consultation, *shūrā* came to mean that a head of state, be he a Caliph or a sultan [king or *amīr* (governor)] should consult such persons as he thinks are repositories of wisdom in order to decide important affairs.³⁰⁴

Tafsīr al-Manār, while it rhetorically questioned why the Prophet did not leave an institution like a contemporary representative council, answers "leaving the matter unspecified allows for the flexibility on how the community could conduct their affairs. This is because societies change and if a more detailed political institution were specified, it would be outdated by time".³⁰⁵ It is also important, it says, to note that politics is a matter of dealing with temporal affairs or *al-maṣāliḥ al-dunyawīyyah* by means of religious principles. As long as the principles are followed, how affairs are conducted depends on the discretion of the *ummah*.³⁰⁶

Muslim scholars have since taken the idea of *shūrā* formulated by the authors of *Tafsīr al-Manār* and expanded its theory. As Mohammad Hashim Kamali has written:

Being one of the salient principles of government prescribed in the Qur'ān, *shūrā* requires the head of state and government leaders to conduct community affairs through

³⁰³See Husein Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*, 508-510.

³⁰⁴Fazlur Rahman, "Islam and Political Action", 154.

³⁰⁵*TAM*, Vol. 5, 188.

³⁰⁶*TAM*, Vol. 4, 201. See also in Malcolm H. Kerr, *Islamic Reform*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), 181-182.

consultation with community members. However, the Qur'ānic provisions on *shūrā* are primarily concerned with laying down the basic foundation on *shūrā* as a principle of public law, but the details as to its manner of implementation and the subject matter on which consultation must take place are left out. The Qur'ān provides no instruction on whether all community affairs should be determined through consultation, or whether *shūrā* applies to government affairs alone. But, this absence of specific detail has actually given *shūrā* the unfettered flexibility of being applicable to all circumstances, and to all matters that are of concern to the community. The general language of the Qur'ānic provisions on *shūrā* has also led to the conclusion that *shūrā* is an integral part of Islam and that it must, in principle, permeate every sphere of public, and even personal, life of Muslims. We also find in the Qur'ānic text that the requirement to carry out consultation occurs side by side with the references to the pillars of Islam, such as profession to the faith (*īmān*), obligatory prayer (*ṣalāh*), and legal alms (*zakāh*). This has once again been taken as evidence that *shūrā* is conveyed in terms which not only comprise the affairs of government but also relations within the family, between neighbours, between partners in business, between employer and employee, and virtually all spheres of life where it is deemed to be of benefit to the people.³⁰⁷

There are two Qur'ānic texts that speak of *shūrā*. The one mentioned in passing by Kamali, above, is from *Sūrah* 42 (*al-Shūrā*): 38, which is one of the verses in the form of praise to the early community of believers in a series of verses before and after it. It reads,

Those who respond to the call of their Lord, they establish the prayer, they consult on their affairs among themselves (*shūrā baynahum*) and they spend of what we have granted them of sustenance . . .

In this text we can clearly see that consultation occurs side by side with the three pillars of faith. Indeed, Muslim scholars have concluded that *shūrā* is an obligation of an order

³⁰⁷Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Freedom of Expression in Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Berita Publishing Sdn. Bhd., 1994), 41-42.

similar to the pillars of faith.³⁰⁸ While the afore-mentioned verse was revealed in Makkah, the next one was revealed in Madinah when an Islamic government was established. Thus, it was conveyed in a form of command and this laid the textual foundation of *shūrā* as a principle of Islamic government.³⁰⁹ The Prophet was commanded in *Sūrah* 3 (*Āli 'Imrān*): 159 to "Consult them [the companions] in community affairs. When you have reached a decision, then place your trust in God". Many renowned scholars have written about *shūrā* and concurred that this verse is not just a recommendation, but an obligatory command addressed primarily to the head of state to ensure that it is properly implemented in government affairs.³¹⁰

The concept of obedience to the *ulū al-amr* is one of the most important contribution of *Tafsīr al-Manār* for modern Muslims. What is so admirable about *Tafsīr al-Manār* is the fact that it has taken an idea which we now call democracy, which has been non-existent in Islamic societies for more or less fourteen centuries and given it a new life. Without doubt it was the practice of western democracy which inspired *Tafsīr al-Manār* to suggest it to Muslims; nevertheless, this was done in the spirit of *tawhīd*, the theological foundation which is the basis of all Islamic activities. That is the reason why *Tafsīr al-Manār's* democracy is acceptable to Muslims. It is an Islamised democracy under the *sharī'ah*. So strong was the attraction of *Tafsīr al-Manār's* idea that it spread and was in turn accepted by Hamka in his *Tafsīr al-Azhar*.

³⁰⁸Ibid., 42-43.

³⁰⁹Ibid.

³¹⁰See Muhammad Asad, *Principles of State and Government in Islam*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966) 57. See also Muḥammad al-Bahī, *Al-Dīn wa al-Dawlah min Tawjīhāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1971), 387. See also 'Abd Karīm Zaydān, *Majmu'ah Buḥūth Fiqhiyyah*, (Baghdad: Maktabah al-Quds, 1975), 37.

Ṭā'ah to the Ulū al-Amr according to Tafsīr al-Azhar: the political leadership

When we compare *Tafsīr al-Manār* with *Tafsīr al-Azhar* on the subject of obedience to the *ulū al-amr* we can find that there is a difference of emphasis. *Tafsīr al-Manār* expounds verse 4:59, which commands obedience to God, His Messenger and the *ulū al-amr*, each by itself. *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, on the other hand, links immediately the discussion of obedience to the *ulū al-amr* with obedience to God and the Messenger saying:

This verse by itself indicates that human society, especially the society of believers must obey rules and regulations. The highest rules and regulations are the laws of God. This is the law that must first be obeyed. God has revealed the law through His Messengers. . . . The Messengers practised and explained the laws within the holy books . . . The messages of the holy books in principle are for the safety and happiness of Mankind. . . . A believer is commanded to obey God, first and foremost, so that when he does good, he does it not for want of approval, nor for worldly gains. And when he refrain from doing evil, it is not from fear of others. . . . but because he feels that he is constantly under the watchful "eye of God". . . Obedience based on the belief in God and the Hereafter by itself [should] make a person good. The law of the land alone is not sufficient to ensure safety and peace for a society if not accompanied by the belief that there is an authority higher than that of humans which is able to judge when man does wrong.

Then a believer is commanded to obey the Messenger because obedience to the Messenger is an extension of obedience to God. There are many laws or commands of God where obedience is obligatory but which cannot be performed without guidance and example. The guidance and example are with the Messenger. Thus, obedience to the Messenger perfects religious life. . . In fact, attitudes, actions, manners and etiquettes of the Messenger are all model examples for us.

Then [we are commanded to] obey *ulū al-amr minkum*, [which means] those who have authority among you or from you; which in turn means those whom you have chosen or have accepted their authority as a fact.³¹¹

By the above statement, Hamka right away ties up obedience to the *ulū al-amr* with obedience to law and order, emphasising obedience to God and His Messenger as a prelude to obedience to the *ulū al-amr*. That the *ulū al-amr* must be from among the people or chosen by them is mentioned at least twice in this section.³¹²

Tafsīr al-Azhar does not refer much to the modern system of government, but merely states that whether the *ulū al-amr* are to be elected or designated, this ought to be suitable with the time and place and by the will and wisdom of the people. What is important according to *Tafsīr al-Azhar* is that the *amānah* or responsibility of the government towards the people is carried out.³¹³ It gives the impression that how the system and processes of governance of an Islamic state are operated is not important as long as the Shari'ah law is established in the state. *Tafsīr al-Azhar* explicitly states that it does not matter whether the head of state is a sultan, caliph or president.³¹⁴ We gather that the reason for not elucidating on the system of government is due to the fact that the western democratic system was taken for granted as suitable to follow. In addition, Indonesia at the time had already adopted democracy. However, it was not working as expected, and this became a difficult issue.³¹⁵ Moreover, it is probable that this is also in consideration of the readership of *Tafsīr al-Azhar* who came from varied

³¹¹TAZ, Vol. 2, 1276-1277.

³¹²Ibid., 1277 and 1285.

³¹³Ibid., 1282.

³¹⁴Ibid., 1285.

³¹⁵The first Indonesian President, Soekarno imposed "Demokrasi Terpimpin" or guided democracy in 1959. See Muhammad Kamal Hassan, *Muslim Intellectual Responses to "New Order" Modernization in Indonesia*, (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1982) 8. See also B. J. Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia*, 99.

backgrounds, thus the author considered that it is not important to furnish the details. In many places, however, we find that *Tafsīr al-Azhar* seems to suggest that it supports democracy. Thus, like *Tafsīr al-Manār*, it discusses the politico-religious significance of a democratic system using various *aḥādīth* on the practices of the Prophet and the *riwāyāt* concerning the practices of his companions. Again, like *Tafsīr al-Manār* and other *tafsīr*, it does not forget to blame Mu'āwiyah b. Abī Sufyān, the fifth caliph, for destroying *shūrā* or consultation in exchange for hereditary rule. At the same time it also refers to some scholars who supported Mu'āwiyah saying that the spirit of Arab tribalism (*'aṣabīyyah*) was so strong that there was nothing Mu'āwiyah could do to prevent bloodshed and chaos at the time, but to take matters in his own hand. Since his tribe was the strongest, he was able to keep order.³¹⁶

On *ṭā'ah* to the *ulū al-amr*, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* states that its meaning is obedience to the decisions which have been agreed upon by the *ulū al-amr*. In addition, it also says that the *ulū al-amr* must ensure that what has been agreed upon is carried out.³¹⁷ Such statements sometimes refer to the local context in which people meet and discuss but seldom carry out the resolution that they agreed upon, making organisation ineffective and inefficient. Thus, we can see here the difference of emphasis between *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar*. *Tafsīr al-Manār* was written to educate and persuade the Muslims to adopt a better system of government to change their deplorable situations it sees then. *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, on the other hand, was written after the supposedly better system of government was realised but had to continue to correct existing problems, prevalent in its own socio-political context. We can see in this case that merely adopting a system of governance does not ensure the workability of the

³¹⁶ TAZ, Vol. 2, 1280-1281.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 1278.

system in another social context. What is needed is the readiness to understand the philosophy or spirit behind the new system of government.

Due to the *tawhīdic* principle where only God has the ultimate command over law, *ṭā'ah* to the *ulū al-amr* is conditional only on what is good, i.e., “referred to the Qur’ānic and *ḥadīth* texts, or the spirit of *sharī'ah* which has been thought of and deliberated by scholars as to carry the best meaning, through *ijtihād* and *qiyās*. The purpose of consultation on government matters is no other than for the wellbeing of the people”.³¹⁸ *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, restating the Qur’ānic injunction, adds that if there should arise differences of opinions, they must be referred to the Qur’ān and Sunnah, because the utmost obedience is to be rendered to God and His Messenger as accorded by the verse under discussion. This means that differences must be verified whether they are against the spirit of the Qur’ān and Sunnah or not. Those that are against the two sources of reference would be irrelevant. If the differences are due to mere preferences, the highest authority or *al-Imām al-A'ẓam* should decide according to his *ijtihād*.³¹⁹

As to the question of who are the *ulū al-amr*, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* refers to the explanation of *Tafsīr al-Manār*. It says,

Some '*ulamā'*' (scholars) are of the view that the *ulū al-amr* are not to be only from among the religious '*ulamā'*' but also from the military leaders, directors of important institutions (*penguasa-penguasa besar*) and [a body which represents] the farmers in the country. Muḥammad 'Abduh's view is that in our time, directors of big corporations, professors and scholars of various fields, journalists and other important people in society are considered *the ahl al-ḥāll wa al-'aqd*, and have the right to be called for consultation.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 1282.

³¹⁹ Ibid., 1282.

Islam presents a great deal of flexibility as to who can be considered the *ulū al-amr*, those who can be called for consultation. This can be accomplished either by election or appointed by the head of government. 320

Shūrā

Regarding *shūrā*, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* concedes that it was Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ‘Abduh who brought it back to the Muslims.³²¹ Its writer also mentions that the Muslims had forgotten much about *shūrā* so that when the Turkish modernists wanted to borrow the western type parliamentary institution, they were accused by other Muslims of trying to change their religion.³²² Here again we see *Tafsīr al-Azhar* equating western democracy with the Islamic idea of *shūrā*. The attitude of *Tafsīr al-Azhar* in this matter is that adopting a foreign institution which can serve the Muslims in their religion is good.

While *Tafsīr al-Azhar* does not explicate the details of *shūrā*, it says that a society must have a consultative body [*wajib bermesyuarat*] to discuss with its members all their affairs, arguing that *shūrā* is a very important concept since it is mentioned by verses 3:159 and 45: 38. It also suggests that each level should have a consultative body whether they be a small or big village, city or state, even those who live on the same street should meet often to discuss their affairs among themselves. It is implied by *Tafsīr al-Azhar* that the lack of consultative interaction in society causes authoritarian behaviour among some of its members. To emphasise its point, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* hints at the prevalent scene in Indonesian society, saying,

It is far from the teaching of Islam that a society should be controlled by one person, such that a village chief can behave like a god (*dewa*) in his village, a governor like a

320 Ibid., 1281-1282.

321 *TAZ*, Vol. 2, 971.

322 Ibid., 970.

raksaksa (a mythical giant demon) in his district, or a head of state governing according to his whims, surrounded by sycophants (*penjilat-penjilat*) who nod and echo him in chorus on everything that pleases him. 323

What *Tafsīr al-Azhar* says in the passage above was a description of the reality its author was living in, which unfortunately is also the reality in which many Muslims are still suffering today, as a result of never experiencing a true democratic system.

Conclusion to *Ṭā'ah* to Political Leadership in *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar*

Tafsīr al-Manār and *Tafsīr al-Azhar* clearly state their position on *ṭā'ah* or obedience to political leadership. According to both, *ṭā'ah* is obligatory, although the obligation to render obedience to the *ulū al-amr* is conditional upon the *ulū al-amr* fulfilling its trust or *amānah*. In other words, this means not to misrule, but instead to manage the affairs of the people justly, to order what is good for the people and to execute the law of the *sharī'ah*. While this point is adequate as a general rule, coming from sociological exegeses or *tafāsīr ijtīmā'iyah* which comment on social reality, they are both vague in dealing with a number of issues. For example, who the *ulū al-amr* are or rather the processes of determining how they are to be accepted as *ulū al-amr* is not sufficiently dealt with. In addition, the important question of what is the relationship between the *ulū al-amr* and the *ummah*, such as to whom will the *ulū al-amr* be accountable is also not discussed sufficiently, as noted by Malcolm Kerr.³²⁴ If the *ulū al-amr* are to be identified as those in positions of authority or that authority belongs to those capable of exercising it, as both *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar* put it, this then can be read as just another way of saying that might is right.³²⁵ Furthermore, the mechanism which would “check and balance” that the *amānāt* are fulfilled is also not mentioned.

323 Ibid.

324 Malcolm H. Kerr, *Islamic Reform*, 162.

325 Ibid.

Therefore, as it is, this is no better than a dictatorship or an oligarchy. These are questions that both *tafāsīr* ought to have discussed which would have answered our question on how to obey the *ulū al-amr*.

Nevertheless, we appreciate *Tafsīr al-Manār* especially, for being one of the pioneers in putting forward an idea of a relatively democratic form of government based on the western model adapted to Qur'ānic principle, that obedience to the *ulū al-amr* has to be based on obedience to God and His Messenger. That way obedience is based on the guided moral-ethical principles of the Qur'ān. We can argue for *Tafsīr al-Manār*'s position to maintain flexibility in determining the system of governance which the Qur'ān provided by saying that being the first to lay out a political position, perhaps it hoped that the Islamic political theory would develop for the better. Moreover, *Tafsīr al-Manār* was written at a difficult time, in the era of the fall of the Ottoman caliphate, and the Muslim community had never experienced any other type of governance for a long time but an authoritarian one. Therefore, if *Tafsīr al-Manār*'s theory of state is not systematic, it is understandable.

Nobody can deny the necessity and importance of obedience for a government to run smoothly, no matter what its form. History have witnessed time and time again that a dictator is a dictator only as long as obedience is rendered to him unquestionably by the masses, perhaps due to structured oppression, and supported by the government's institution such as the judiciary, military, police and supported even by the supposedly free press. If the government's apparatus decided not to follow the whim of the dictator or government elite, there will no longer be a dictator. Therefore, we can understand the interest of Muslim governments especially in misusing the Qur'ānic verse we have discussed earlier regarding obedience to the *ulū al-amr* in order to facilitate its interests.

Considering the grave implication of the misapplication of obedience to the *ulū al-amr*, we feel that it is less appropriate for *Tafsīr al-Azhar* which was written in the 1960s not to elaborate even briefly on the details of how to obey or not to obey the *ulū al-amr* in times when the *ulū al-amr* do not keep their *amānah*. Of course we can defend Hamka, the author of *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, by saying that he is not a political thinker. However, since he was an *‘ālim* with a great following, knew the political leadership, had first-hand information on the political condition and the corruption in the government which he often alluded to in the *tafsīr*, and himself was a victim of governmental injustice, we expected some sort of ideas from him which would limit the power of the government. Yet he chose to appeal to human conscience with moral-ethical exhortations as taken for example, from Sūrah 4 (*Āli ‘Imrān*): 161, which reads:

No prophet could (ever) cheat [*yaghull*] in his trust. Any person who is false will come with what he has misappropriated on the Day of Judgement. Then shall every soul receive its due and none shall be dealt with unjustly.

Although the reason or occasion of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) of this verse was to defend the Prophet from the accusation of mishandling the war booty of the battle of Uhud, as stated by both *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, the point concerning corruption in the verse gave *Tafsīr al-Azhar* a means to relate the discussion to corruption by government elite and officers in order to censure it. 326 He wrote:

We can take the example of the corruption which is widespread in a country in which the head of state to the ministers and high ranking officers are infected by corruption. The powerful live in comfort and luxury, coveting the wealth of the state for themselves, while many of the people die of starvation. They are oppressed with all kinds of mortgages and never experience any ease. The lower officers whose salary is sufficient only for four days out of a month are forced to be corrupt. They came late to

326 See *TAM*, Vol. 4, 215-218 and *TAZ*, Vol. 2, 977-983.

the office, because they took outside jobs . . . All form of corruption is wrong. This verse asserts that all sort of corruption will be accounted for on the Day of Judgement.³²⁷

He also added a few *riwāyāt* to affirm his position. One of them is about ‘Umar al-Khaṭṭāb’s censuring of Abū Hurayrah who received a present while on his job collecting *zakāt*. According to ‘Umar, the present must be relinquished to the treasury since Abū Hurayrah would have no reason to accept a present if he was not a *zakāt* collector.³²⁸ *Tafsīr al-Azhar* then related this story to the present practice of taking commissions by ministers and high-ranking officers when signing contracts for government businesses or tenders from business contractors, which according to ethical and religious considerations are also corruption. *Tafsīr al-Azhar* does not forget to add that “although *fiqh* may allow such dealings, religious feeling is not just *fiqh*, for *fiqh* we can always find a religious teacher (*kiyai*) to find excuses”.³²⁹ From that statement, perhaps we can deduce that *Tafsīr al-Azhar*’s position is that appealing to the ethical and religious conscience is the best method to curb corruption since agency of law enforcement alone will not be effective to stop any kind of corruption if individuals and the society itself are not ethical. In fact, the law enforcement agency could be employed to counter what is just and ethical.

***Ṭā‘ah* to the *Ulū al-Amr*: Religious Scholars (‘*Ulamā*’)**

Introduction

The idea of obedience to the ‘*ulamā*’ (sg. ‘*ālim*’) began with obedience to an individual teacher or ‘*ālim*’ who is respected for his Islamic knowledge. In the beginning, Islamic

³²⁷ TAZ, Vol. 2, 980.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid.

knowledge comprised the knowledge of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah of which the 'ulamā' are the repository. Respect for the 'ālim has to do with respect for knowledge, since it is also a religious obligation, as in the oft-quoted *aḥādīth*, "Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim" and "Seek knowledge even into China". The phenomenon of seeking knowledge (*talab al-'ilm*) gives the individual teachers great importance. According to Fazlur Rahman,

The beginning and spread of Islamic learning in the early days of Islam is centred around individuals rather than schools. The content of Islamic thought is also characterised by individual effort. Certain outstanding personalities, who had learned the tradition and had built around it their own legal and theological systems, attracted students from far and near who sought knowledge from them. The first chief characteristic of this learning, therefore, and the one which has persisted throughout the Middle Ages of Islam, is the individual importance of the teacher. The teacher, after giving his full course, personally gave a certificate (*ijāza*) to the student who was then allowed to teach. The certificate was sometimes given in an individual subject – say *fiqh* or *Ḥadīth*. Sometimes it concerned several subjects and sometimes it was valid only for specified books which the pupil had read. Later, when the *madrasas* came into existence, a system of examination was often instituted. But so great was the role and the prestige of the teacher as an individual that, even after the organisation of the *madrasas*, the biographies of illustrious men and scholars usually give the names of their teachers and it is relatively rare to find the names of the colleges at which they studied. Even the certificates were issued often in the name of the teacher rather than that of the school.³³⁰

The basis of the demand for obedience to the 'ulamā' rests in the *ḥadīth* which mentions the Prophet to have said that "the 'ulamā' are the heirs of the prophets".³³¹ Although obedience is supposed to be rendered to knowledge, in terms of practicing it

³³⁰ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979) 184–185.

³³¹ James Robson, *Mishkat Al-Masabih* (English translation with explanatory notes), (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1975) Vol. 1, Bk.2 "Knowlegde", 53.

and rendering services as required by that knowledge, the 'ulamā' as repository of that knowledge are the one's being obeyed due to the problem of differentiation. Moreover, in the understanding of common people -- since Islamic knowledge includes the practical and moral-ethical aspect -- one who is an 'ālim is expected to practice his knowledge and be a moral-ethical person. Without the strength of moral character, he is not respected. He also carries the responsibility to disseminate his knowledge. Thus, the authority of an 'ālim lies in his knowledge, his moral character and his role as the propagator of knowledge and religious ideas or as an Islamic activist in the footsteps of the Prophet.³³² With that authority the 'ulamā' are also considered *ulū al-amr*.

Doctrines and their Implications

As students of Islam are aware, the schisms in Islam arose due to the sophisticated intellectual activities of the 'ulamā'. If we look at Fazlur Rahman's works such as *Islam, Islam and Modernity*, and *Revival and Reform in Islam*, in which the central theme is revival and reform, we find that the rise and development of dogma was the result of the extreme opposing ideas which were concerned with the practical and political issues. Furthermore, while these activities were going on, and because of the opposing nature of these ideas, in order to defeat each other, there was a tendency among these schools to issue policies which, when raised to almost credal status, defeated the true Islamic spirit.

For example, the doctrine of the Khawārij (Seceders from 'Alī's party) that grave sinners are no longer Muslims, while commendable in certain ways because it stemmed from their idealism towards righteous conduct demanded by the Qur'ān,

³³² See M. Dawam Rahardjo, *Intelektual Intelligensia Dan Perilaku Politik Bangsa*, 185-192.

particularly in the public sector and the administrative authority -- referring especially to the Umayyad caliphate -- was self-defeating. The Khawārij caused not only a bloodbath in the Community, due to their active participation in taking arms against those who took even a neutral position, in this case, the Islamic community in general, but also caused intra-Khawārij feuds.³³³ As a result the Khawārij were kept under tight control in the first century of Islam by the Umayyads, supported by the Community. The Khawārij were not just any fanatics; Fazlur Rahman cited evidence to show that many Khawārij leaders were religious, highly learned men and capable of forming original opinions on law and doctrine. The Khawārij leaders were inclined to hold systematic discussion of religio-moral subjects on a regular basis. Their teachings flowed from their idealism in which they reject justification by faith alone, and make deeds an essential part of faith. Being egalitarian, they rejected the view that the office of the Caliph must be confined to the Quraysh tribe, and they thus held that any Muslim with unimpeachable character was eligible for the office.³³⁴ We can see from here that although the Khawārij had a sound theological foundation, their extreme idealism, uncompromising fanaticism and exclusivist attitude caused them to be unpopular.

On the other side of the story were the majority of pious leaders of the Community in Medina who were largely dissatisfied with the Umayyads. In their powerlessness as well as a reaction to the chaos and bloodbaths created by the Khawārij, they recommended that one should desist from passing judgements on a grave sinner whose fate will be decided by God. They were called the Murji'ah (those

³³³ See Fazlur Rahman, *Revival and Reform in Islam: A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism* [edited by Ebrahim Moosa], (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2000) 33-38.

who postponed judgement). This wise and moderate attitude when formulated as a doctrine, where there is no longer a question of a more practical attitude also goes to extremes. Against the extreme doctrine of the Khawārij, they formulated the idea that sin does not abrogate faith. They saw a separation between faith and deeds based on a *ḥadīth*, that the Prophet once said repeatedly to his Companion Abū Dharr, that a person who professes that there is no God but God shall go to paradise even if he commits adultery and theft. This is absolutely against the teaching of the Qur'ān, for the Qur'ān always coupled the mention of faith with good deeds. In the doctrine of the Murji'ah, it followed that a Muslim guilty of heinous sins still has faith and is a Muslim and is to be treated as such until God finally decides on the Day of Judgement.³³⁵ Logically, this sank to the level of pure determinism, falling in line with popular moral laxity and in fact becoming an instrument in the defence of the Umayyad regime. According to Fazlur Rahman, from the 3rd Hijrah/9th CE, the practice which began with the attitude of moderation towards the political administrators “changed into a theoretical and doctrinal principle, according to which, although ‘there can be no obedience to a sinful command’, yet ‘the ruler should be obeyed even though he be unjust’ for ‘an unjust ruler is better than lawlessness’”.³³⁶

We can see that the foundation of the doctrine of *qadar* (Divine Will) is already laid down in the doctrine of the Murji'ah. Related to the issue of *qadar* are the

334 See *ibid.*, see also Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, 167-170.

335 See Fazlur Rahman, *Revival and Reform in Islam*, 51.

336 Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, 169. See also “Dasar-dasar Ahli Sunnah Wal-Jamaah Dalam Pentadbiran Negara [Doctrines of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah State Government]” by the Mufti of the Kingdom of Brunei with his official title, Yang Dimuliakan Pehin Datu Seri Maharaja Dato Seri Utama Haji Ismail b. Omar Abdul Aziz, in *Aqidah Ahli Sunnah Wal-Jamaah* (1), (Brunei: Pusat Da'wah Islamiah, 1986) 3-53. 30.

theological schools called the Mu'tazilah and the Ash'arī. The Mu'tazilah is a rational theological school, exposed to Hellenism, Hellenized Christianity, Manichean duality, Gnosticism and Buddhistic elements.³³⁷ Being the defender of Islam against those influences, they were inclined towards the use of reason in religious and moral speculation. Against extreme Murji'ism, their issue was to save the goodness of God and to make man responsible. The question they asked is whether God or man is the productive agent of all acts. They rejected determination in favour of the authorship of Man of his own acts. For them, only this way could reward and punishment for man and justice of God can be intelligible. They deduced that God would not only be unjust if He did not carry out His reward and punishment, but he would also be a liar. They pushed their rationality further, that the Qur'ānic dicta concerning the grace and mercy of God are interpreted in terms of the necessity and duty of God to man, i.e., God must do the best for man. He must send Revelations and Prophets to mankind. Another important 'problem' associated with the Mu'tazilah is their doctrine of the unity of God. In order to save God's divine transcendence, they rationalised divine attributes from anthropomorphic description which they called likening God to man or *tashbīh*. God's uniqueness and unity are absolute, and the so-called divine attributes are all dimensions of the divine essence. Thus they deny that God should have eternal attributes and qualities. Affirmation of eternal attributes and qualities of God would tantamount to *shirk*, such as affirming the Qur'ān as the eternal divine speech. According to their reasoning, the Qur'ān is created in space and time. To others, the createdness of the

³³⁷ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, 87.

Qur'ān implies another meaning, one example being that the Qur'ān loses its divine authority.

The orthodoxy, which was subsumed by Ash'arism, saw the freedom of man in the doctrine of the Mu'tazilah as bondage to God. The issue here is to save the omnipotence and absolute will of God, for otherwise God's existence may seem superfluous. The Ash'arīs insisted that God is above the human concepts of justice. They claimed that if God sent all good persons to Hell and all evil persons to the Garden, all this would be perfect justice because He does not owe anyone anything. He can do whatever He likes and whatever he likes would be justice.³³⁸ In opposition to the Mu'tazilī doctrine, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d. 324 H/ 935 CE), the founder of Ash'arism, formulated the idea that humanity cannot act at all, i.e., God creates all human acts and man only acquires them. They are opposed to all the ideas and implications inherent in the Mu'tazilī doctrines. The Ash'arīs declared that good and evil can be known only through revelation and not through natural reason, and denied that divine commandments in the Qur'ān had any purpose which means that they were to be obeyed solely because they were divine commandments. They rejected causality. According to Fazlur Rahman, al-Bāqillānī (d. 403 H/1012 CE), the main elaborator of Ash'arī doctrine, recommended that belief in the atomism of time and space, i.e., rejection of causality should be officially required from Muslims.³³⁹

Ash'arism took a long time to gain general acceptance but it triumphed against the excessive rationality of Mu'tazilism and became the official theology of Sunnism.

³³⁸ See Fazlur Rahman, *Revival and Reform in Islam*, 62.

Irjā', the reaction of accepting a pacifist or non-activist attitude which was inherent in Sunnism in the sense of pre-determinism is completely assumed by Ash'arism in the form of doctrine.³⁴⁰ The doctrine was elaborated further by the Ash'arīs based on the opposition to the Mu'tazilah instead of analysing what is presented by the Qur'ān. Many scholars see the far-reaching influence of this systematic theology of saving the omnipotence of God; for example, the disparity of this theology, and law, which considered human beings as free and responsible agents. Its postponement of judgement on what is moral and its pre-deterministic view of God's will lend a mutual attraction or connection to political quietism and moral laxity in general. Furthermore, due to its rejection of causality and the use of reason there ensued the disintegration of knowledge in the natural sciences. It has to be said that while the doctrines were original and sophisticated, the scholars seem to be oblivious of their implications on human lives.

The reason we explained the problems concerning the issues which developed in Islamic doctrines above is because among other factors, these problems have contributed to the rise of Islamic Modernism. The doctrines are among the positions that have been very influential in determining the worldview and action of Muslims. Those issues mentioned are the same ones discussed by the Modernists, but approached in a different manner. Among modern Islamic intellectual circles, it is claimed that

339 See Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982) 27. See also Fazlur Rahman, *Revival and Reform in Islam*, 57-60.

340 For detailed treatment and analysis of Islamic doctrines see Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979); *Islam and Modernity*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982); *Revival and Reform in Islam: A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism* [edited by Ebrahim Moosa], (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2000). See also W. Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973).

Islamic Modernism is a "hodge podge" of some of these doctrinal developments adopted and modified for suitability. We would like to emphasise that although we do not doubt that western ideas affected the Modernists, we can also see that the Modernists are not removed from the past Islamic tradition. There is a continuation in their effort to interpret Islam, in sources and ideas. They "pick and choose" what is relevant not from outside, but from within tradition. The result of these efforts are, the concept of God and Man (including nature) which is positive, utilitarian and humanistic in nature under the comprehensive articulation of *tawhīd*, the emphasis on work and faith without fanatical leanings, and the use of reason balanced with revelation. All these ideas, while not original but because of the new approaches are in themselves a great contribution.

To return to the issue of *tā'ah* to scholars, Ash'arī doctrine which became Islamic official theology is manifested in practice in the politics of the Muslims and Islamic mysticism. While we have discussed obedience to the political rulers early in this chapter, it is quite relevant to mention that obedience to scholars, or as a whole, obedience or *taqlīd* to the Islamic tradition in its laws and doctrines which were largely the works of scholars, has something to do with the influence of Sufism. We say this in view of the fact that the early Muslims were occupied with debates, in all spheres of knowledge but mostly religious sciences, sometimes to convert those considered heretics. The fact that there were so many schools of thought in religious and secular fields shows that there was great tolerance and freedom of thought and research.³⁴¹

³⁴¹ See Charles Michael Stanton, *Higher Learning in Islam – The Classical Period, A. D. 700-1300*, (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1990), Chapters 2 and 3, 21-92.

Sufism, on the other hand, not only teaches passivity towards God, but also towards the Sufi shaykh. A Sufi disciple must obey his master completely. Unlike the regular processes of traditional Islamic instructions and learning, where some reasoning, argument and disputation with the teacher is encouraged to a certain extent, the Sufi path discouraged all this. As we know, there is a strong connection between the traditional '*ulamā*' and Sufism especially after al-Ghazzālī. Most traditional '*ulamā*' were themselves Sufi adepts.³⁴² They learn from and influence each other. Thus, like theology, Sufism was and is still being revived and reformed again and again to conform to what is considered the correct teachings of Islam.

What is meant by obedience to scholars here is obedience to the laws and doctrines created by scholars, in other words, obedience to religious authority, in an unquestioning manner as if the scholars of old were infallible. It is due to the above mentioned heritage that movements such as the one brought by Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb were followed by the *salafī* movement of 'Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā. They have correctly thought out that the problem with Islam during their time was that Islam as a simple religion was lost to sophisticated theology. Law became static and irrelevant to present life because of fanaticism in certain schools of thought or the founders of the schools. As a result of certain elements in the heritage, immorality was tolerated in addition to superstitions and syncretic religious accretions. The basic commands of

³⁴² We have given the account of Hamka's forefathers as example in Chapter 2. See also Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, 148-149;166. See also Sulaiman b. Ibrahim Umar, *Al-Ṭuruq al-Ṣufiyyah fī Mālīziyā* [The Sufi Groups in Malaysia], Unpublished MA thesis at Faculty of Islamic Da'wah, Al-Azhar University, 1996, 142-143. Among the points highlighted is that the specialization in any branch of traditional Islamic studies was considered incomplete if the students did not undertake Sufism. Teachers of jurisprudence, theology, Sufism and other branches of Islamic studies consulted and discussed with each

religion like prayer (*ṣalāt*) and alms giving (*zakāt*) were neglected. The bases of these problems are theological in nature. Thus, the call to return to the sources of pristine Islam, the sources of which are the Qur'ān and the true Sunnah of the Prophet.

Tā'ah to the 'Ulamā' or Taqlīd in Tafsīr al-Manār and Tafsīr al-Azhar

It is well known that *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar* reject *taqlīd* or blind following vehemently. The rejection of *taqlīd* is based on the principle of *tawḥīd*, direct reference from the Qur'ān, and rational arguments. There are several kinds of *taqlīd* discussed by both *tafāsīr*, *taqlīd* to the *madhhab* (school of thought) or the founders, *taqlīd* in relation to religious practices which involved *khurafāt* or superstitions, *bid'ah* or religious innovation and Sufi practices. Of course *taqlīd* to wrong understanding of *'aqīdah* is also not left out from the discussion but phrased in a different manner. In fact, it is quite clear that 'Abduh's *Risālah al-Tawḥīd* deals with the inadequacy of Ash'arī's theology.³⁴³ Since *taqlīd* has been widely discussed, we are going to mention aspects as to why *taqlīd* or obedience to the *'ulamā'* is rejected. It seems that what is written in both these *tafāsīr* is to pinpoint the wrongs and irrationality of these practices so that readers are aware that these practices do not originate from the teaching of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. We have chosen a few examples for illustration. *Tafsīr al-Manār* argues that *Sūrah 2 (al-Baqarah)*: 170-171 which reads

When it is said to them: "Follow what God has revealed". They say: "No! We shall follow the ways of our fathers". What! Even though their fathers were devoid of wisdom and guidance?

other. Most scholars engaged in interdisciplinary activities so that it was difficult to tell who were the Sufis and those who were not.

The parable of those who reject faith is as if one were to shout like a goat-herd, to things that listen to nothing but calls and cries; deaf, dumb, and blind, they are devoid of understanding.

is evidence that following tradition without the bases of revelation is not allowed in Islam. Following traditions merely because they are inherited from the forefathers is no guarantee that one is on the correct path. Thus, those who add into religious practices and law that is not commanded by the Qur'ān are those who speak about God without knowledge.³⁴⁴ It is known and agreed by all 'ulamā' that matters pertaining to 'aqīdah (religious beliefs), 'ibādāt (religious practices, worship) and ḥukm (law) are fixed by the Qur'ān and Sunnah and therefore there should not be any addition or creativity in these areas. The fact that *bid'ah* was prevalent in Islamic religious life shows that its community had strayed from the true teachings of Islam and the 'ulamā' allowed this to happen. In this connection, *Tafsīr al-Manār* mentions some of the heretical practices that have entered the religious life of the Muslims, for example visits to the grave to perform many un-Islamic practices there in the name of religion. It says that it is customary among the Egyptians, while carrying out a funeral, to chant poems and carry silver lamps before corteges. There are many people belonging to the Sufi groups who chant *awrād* (litanies) at tombs, and in streets and markets. But the same people would not care to observe the prayer (*ṣalāt*) or show the same enthusiasm in observing it as they do in their litanies which they perform on the "nights of certain *walīs*".³⁴⁵ It also states:

³⁴³ Nurcholish Madjid, *Tradisi Islam* [Islamic Tradition], (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1997) 110.

³⁴⁴ *TAM*, Vol. 2, 90.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid*.

This verse clearly announces that blind following (*taqlīd*), without reason and guidance, is a characteristic of the godless. For one becomes a believer only when he grasps his religion with reason and comprehends it with his soul, so that he becomes fully convinced of it. But he who is trained simply to admit, without the use of reason, and to practice without thinking, even though it be something good, he is not to be called a believer. The design of faith is not that a man should be drilled for good as though he were trained for it like an animal; but rather that the reason and soul of man should be elevated by knowledge and comprehension . . . and that he should practise the good not only for the reason that he is thoughtlessly imitating his fathers and ancestors. For this reason the Qur'ān here calls the unbelievers "deaf, dumb, blind, who have no understanding". 346

The above statement shows that reason is very important in discerning what is to be followed and what not. Religion, according to *Tafsīr al-Manār*, should be explainable through reason. *Tafsīr al-Azhar* began the discussion of the above mentioned verses in a different manner since it connects the verses to those before them. However, the mention of "following the ways of forefathers" in the verse refers to the *bid'ah* practised in the Malay world. For example, when a person dies, his family becomes busy with shopping in order to prepare for a feast. According to the teacher (*guru*) in their village, it is important (*wajib*) that before the dead person is sent to the grave he be prayed for (*didoakan*) so that he may return to the hereafter safe. In order to pray for the dead person, there must be a feast (*kenduri*). It is considered against the religion if a feast is not held. It will be said that the dead person is not saved and that he has died like a dog.³⁴⁷ The feast is also prepared on the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, fortieth, hundredth, and the closing day, the one thousandth day. It is interesting to note

that the Balinese Hindus in Indonesia practise this custom as well. While the dead person is still on his bed, someone would ask how many years he had missed his prayers. The prayers that he missed can be made up by payment in rice to the “religious officials (*pengurus-pengurus agama*, lit. managers of religion)”.³⁴⁸ Many more *bid'ahs* followed to the grave and at the grave. But if any dares to oppose these practices, they are dubbed “*kaum muda*”.³⁴⁹

In this context *Tafsīr al-Azhar* concluded that according to the verses under discussion, God desires that mankind follow true guidance. Blind faith towards teachings based on other than true guidance results in gullibility and vain practices.³⁵⁰ In another place, both *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar* consider *taqlīd* as a kind of *shirk*. In the explication of verse *Sūrah 9 (al-Tawbah): 31* which reads :

They take their priests and anchorites to be their lords other than God and (they take as their Lord) Christ the son of Mary. They were not commanded to worship but only One God: there is no God but He. Praise and glory be to Him. Far is He from having the partners they associate with Him.

Tafsīr al-Manār says that although this verse refers to the *ahl al-kitāb*, the practice which can be equated to taking priests and holy men as god, is widespread among Muslims. Some Muslims can be considered as taking their Sufi shaykh as god because when they are faced with hardships and troubles they invoke their dead saints like al-Badawī, al-Rifā‘ī, ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī, and others. They sacrifice animals on the tombs of their shaykh. There are many who, when slaughtering animals, do not confine

³⁴⁶ *TAM*, Vol. 2, 94.

³⁴⁷ *TAZ*, Vol.1, 378.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid*.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid*.

themselves to pronouncing the name of God (saying *bismillah*) as prescribed by the *sharī'ah*, but also invoke the name of their saints along with it.³⁵¹ *Tafsīr al-Manār* also quotes from al-Rāzī concerning the attitude of some jurists who, whenever verses of the Qur'ān were read with regard to some problems concerning law in which the opinion of their *madhhab* differs from the injunction of the Qur'ān, would not accept what is mentioned by the Qur'ān. Instead, they would be surprised that the Qur'ān would differ from the tradition that they have received from their elders and question the possibility of practising according to the Qur'ān and not according to their *madhhab*.³⁵²

According to the concept of *uluhiyyah* in the principle of *tawhīd* [as we have mentioned in chapter three], when a Muslim takes the word of other than God, or puts precedence on anything other than God, such as the word of a teacher, tradition, Sufi shaykh, which become like a law to himself, he has committed *shirk*.³⁵³ Thus, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* placed the discussion of *Sūrah* 9 (*al-Tawbah*): 31 under the headings “Deifying Human Beings (*Menuhankan Manusia*)” and “Deifying Teachers (*Menuhankan Guru*)” in which the significance of *tawhīd* is unmistakable.³⁵⁴ In discussing this verse both *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar* defined “deifying human beings” and “deifying teachers” by employing the *ḥadīth* reported by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, al-Tirmidhī and Ibn Jarīr to emphasise their point of view on *shirk*. In summary, the *ḥadīth* is about ‘Adī b. Ḥātim who was then a Christian. He went to the Prophet who was reading the verse “They take their priests and anchorites to be their lords (*arbāban*)

350 Ibid., 380-381.

351 *TAM*, Vol. 2, 98.

352 *TAM*, Vol. 10, 367.

353 See *TAM*, Vol. 10, 370.

other than God . . .”, to which ‘Adī b. Ḥātim said that this is not so. The Prophet answered that it is true that the Christians do not worship their priests but whenever the priests permit something, the thing becomes lawful, and when they forbid something it becomes unlawful. This is what making them lord or god means.³⁵⁵

Both *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar* in discussing *taqlīd* informed the readers that the ‘*ulamā*’ of old like Abū Ḥanīfah, Mālik b. Anas, al-Shāfi‘ī, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, the founder of the four *madhhabs*, and other early scholars did not demand to be followed. Instead, all of them cautioned others that their opinions should not be taken without knowing how they have arrived at them. The scholars had also stressed that if their opinion is found to be against the Qur’ān and Sunnah or one of the two sources, it should be disregarded.³⁵⁶

Conclusion to *Tā‘ah* to the ‘*Ulamā*’ or *Taqlīd* in *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar*

The message that can be gathered from both *tafāsīr* is that there is no obedience to the ‘*ulamā*’ without a sound basis of reference. A sound basis of reference in Islam would be revelation and the faculty of reasoning. Reasoning itself is a tool to ascertain whether revelation is authentic or not. Most importantly, obedience to other than God should not overrule the principle of *tawḥīd*. The principle of *tawḥīd* in this case is very useful in setting matters aright. Matters of faith, law and religious practices in Islam are concerned with proper conviction and understanding of revelation, not a mere creation

³⁵⁴ TAZ, Vol. 4, 2926, 2931.

³⁵⁵ See TAM, Vol. 10, 365 and TAZ, Vol. 4, 2926-2927.

of scholars to be followed as dogmas. The key word here is understanding, not in terms of tolerance but comprehension and cognisance. That is why sophisticated doctrines created by scholars of old, even though original, are bound to be rejected when it has been realised that the dogmas are not in accord with the proper understanding of revelation. It is for this reason, and the reason that mankind is fallible that following cannot be done blindly. However, this does not mean that *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar* reject authority. They merely reject authoritarianism and put authority in its proper place. This is evidenced in the work of the *tafāsīr* themselves which refer to other authoritative works.

356 See *TAM*, Vol. 2, 82-83. See also *TAZ*, Vol. 4, 2933.

CHAPTER FIVE

Ṭā'ah in the Family

Introduction

Ṭā'ah or obedience with regard to the family is filial obedience and obedience of a wife to her husband. Filial obedience and obedience of the wife are discussed both in books of *akhlāq* or etiquette of right conduct and in the traditional *tafāsīr*. For the purpose of this chapter we have looked into both to determine their position and concluded that they are in agreement with each other. *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, being considered modern *tafāsīr*, share a similar position, and are notably different from the traditional *tafāsīr*. The significance of *akhlāq* literature is that it is written for a general audience for the practical purpose of educating them about their social and family obligations and responsibilities. The content is supposed to appeal to religious emotion. This literature, contains a great number of *aḥādīth* which 'persuade' by means of reciting the punishment of hell (*al-nār*) or the condemnation of sin and the reward of paradise (*al-jannah*). For example, the well known *ḥadīth* that paradise is at the feet of the mother, the *ḥadīth* that we shall quote below that disobedience to parents is one of the grievous sins, and a *ḥadīth* that says any woman who dies while her husband is pleased with her enters paradise, are mentioned.³⁵⁷ In addition, other *ḥadīths*, which try

³⁵⁷ These *aḥādīth* and those with similar import are quoted in Akhlaq Husain, *Ibubapa Muslim*, [translated into Malay by Mustafa Ramadhan from the English version "Muslim Parents: Their Rights and Duties"], (Kuala Lumpur: Syarikat Ali Imran, 1987) 17, 21; Muhammad Yusuf Islahi, *Etiquettes of Life in Islam*, (Lahore: Islamic Publication Ltd., 1990), 3rd. ed., 213-215. See also Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, "Kitāb Ādāb al-Nikāḥ" [reports retrieved (*takhrīj al-akhbār*) by Zayn al-

to impress upon the imagination of Muslims the position of the wife and the importance of obedience to the husband, may also be noted. The most famous is that which recounts that the Prophet said, "If I were to command someone to prostrate before another, I would order a woman to prostrate before her husband because of enormity of his rights over her".³⁵⁸ As in previous chapters, we are not saying that *ṭā'ah* is totally unjustifiable and therefore should be abandoned. What we are arguing is that *ṭā'ah* must be understood and practised in the proper spirit of *tawḥīd* in order to benefit all the parties involved. What we question is its scope and limit. This is due to the fact that *ṭā'ah* can be used for selfish reasons such as to extract servitude and reverence amounting to abuse, in the case of the family from the children and the wife. Thus, in extreme cases injustices may ensue in the name of obedience, i.e., in the name of religion, to the detriment of personal freedom and dignity, which is God given. In this chapter we will first discuss filial obedience, and later, obedience of a wife to the husband. Our interest is mainly to discuss *ṭā'ah* in the family and the imbalance in its practice and its scope in both areas and *Tafsīr al-Manār's* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar's* contribution in this area.

Dīn Abī al-Faḍl al-'Irāqī (d. 806H)], (Cairo: Dār al-Rayyān li al-Turāth, 1987), Vol. 3, 64 [henceforth cited as *Iḥyā'*].

³⁵⁸ *Ḥadīth* as quoted in Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā'*, "Kitāb Ādāb al-Nikāḥ", 65. ; Muhammad Yusuf Islahī, *Etiquettes of Life in Islam*, 217. See also Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Jauharī, *Al-Akhawāt al-*

Filial Obedience—The Rights of Parents

Muslims have been taught since childhood that the responsibility of a child toward his parents is to obey them. One of the major sins in Islam is disobedience to one's parents.

Filial obedience is derived from Qur'ānic verses and *aḥādith* such as the following:

Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind [*iḥsān*] to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour.

And out of kindness lower to them the wing of humility, and say: "My Lord! Bestow on them Your Mercy as they have cherished me in my childhood".

Your Lord knows best what is in your hearts. If you do good deeds of righteousness, verily He is Most Forgiving to those who turn to Him.

[*Sūrah* 17 (*al-Isrā'*): 23-25]

We have enjoined on man kindness [*iḥsān*] to his parents. In pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth. The carrying of the child to his weaning is thirty months. At last, when he reaches the age of full strength and attains forty years, he says, "O my Lord! Grant me that I may be grateful for Your favours which You have bestowed upon me, and upon both my parents, and that I may work righteousness such as You may approve. And be gracious to me in my progeny. Truly have I turned to You and I am among those who submit in Islam.

[*Sūrah* 46 (*al-Aḥqāf*): 15]

It is narrated on the authority of 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakrah that his father said, "We were in the company of the Messenger of God (pbuh) when he said, 'Shall I not inform you of the most grievous of the grave sins?' (The Messenger repeated it) three times. 'Associating anyone with God, disobedience [*'uqūq*] to parents and false testimony or false utterance'. The Messenger of God (pbuh) was reclining, then he sat down, and he repeated it so many times that we wished he would be silent."³⁵⁹

Muslimāt wa Binā' al-Uṣrah al-Qur'āniyyah [Muslim Sisters and Building Qur'ānic Family], (Manṣūrah: Dār al-Wafā' li al-Ṭabā'ah wa al-Nashar, 1989), 2nd reprint, 197.

³⁵⁹ *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, "Kitāb al-Īmān, Bāb al-Shirk Aqbaḥ al-Dhunūb wa 'Uqūq al-Wālidayn. . .", Vol. 1, 2, 3, ḥadīth no. 87/143, 262.

Abū Hurayrah reported, “A man came to the Messenger of God (pbuh) and said, ‘Who among the people is most deserving of good treatment from me?’ [The Messenger] answered, ‘Your mother’. [The man] asked again, ‘Then who [is the next one]?’ [The Messenger] said, ‘Again, it is your mother’. [The man] said, ‘Then who?’ [The Messenger] said, ‘Again, it is your mother’. [The man] said, ‘Then who?’ [The Messenger] said, ‘After that, it is your father’...³⁶⁰

It should be noted that the word *tā’ah* is not used in any of the Qur’ānic verses and *aḥādīth* above. It is mentioned in *Sūrah* 31 (*Luqmān*): 15, but in the negative form which is, “If they [your parents] strive to make you join in worship with Me [Allah] things that you have no knowledge, obey them not [*lā tuti’humā*]; but bear their company in this life in a good manner [*ma’rūf*]. . .”, a command to disobey parents. Instead, the word *iḥsān*, which has been translated as kindness, is used (*iḥsān* can also be understood as doing something good or beautiful). However, the word *‘uqūq*, which means disobedience, is mentioned in one of the *ḥadīths* above. The scope of *‘uqūq* includes ill-treatment, neglect, ill-mannered, undutiful and refractory.³⁶¹

What is clear from the above quotations is that God and His Messenger have made it obligatory to do good to parents, with the mother being the most deserving person to receive good treatment from her children, since the mother is mentioned specifically. In fact, according to the *ḥadīth*, three times more than the father. The dominant majority (*jumhūr*) of Islamic scholars agree that the mother has more rights

³⁶⁰ *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, “Kitāb al-Birr wa al-Ṣalah wa al-Adāb, Bāb Birr al-Wālidayn . . .”, Vol. 16, 17, 18, ḥadīth no. 2548/1, 80.

³⁶¹ See Edward William Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, (Lahore: Islamic Book Centre, 1982) Bk 1, Pt. 5, 2095. See also *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, Vol. 10, Juz’ 20, 191-194.

upon her children than the father.³⁶² The reason for the special position of the mother according to al-Nawawī, the author of *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, is due to the many difficulties that a mother has to go through for her child. A mother endures the pains of pregnancy and birth; she nurses the child, as well as educates and cares for the child in health and sickness.³⁶³ Perhaps it would not be irrelevant to mention here briefly that children also have several rights, as written in the *akhlāq* literature which in a nutshell are, maintenance (*nafaqah*), which includes food, clothing and shelter; good treatment from parents, which means equal and just treatment; that parents should not practise favouritism (*al-taswiyyah fī al-mu'āmalah*); and education (*al-tarbiyyah wa al-ta'lim*), which is not limited to formal education but includes religion, morals and social etiquette.³⁶⁴

The rights of the parents as mentioned by the *akhlāq* literature are many. The ones related to the commands in the Qur'ān are: good treatment-- which include love, respect, to be dealt with with good manners and behaviour, financial aid if they are poor, and whenever necessary, care of them when they are unable to take care of themselves. They are also due kind speech, prayer for their well-being and the forgiveness of their sins.³⁶⁵ We concur, considering the love and care, and sacrifices that parents make for their children, it is only fitting that children should repay their

³⁶² *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, "Kitāb al-Birr wa al-Ṣalah wa al-Adāb, Bāb Birr al-Wālidayn . . .", Vol. 16, 17, 18, hadīth nō. 2548/1, 80.

³⁶³ Ibid. See also *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, Vol. 14, Juz' 28, 15.

³⁶⁴ Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Jauharī, *Al-Akhawāt al-Muslimāt wa Binā' al-Uṣrah al-Qur'ānīyyah*, 204-208. See also Haji Johari Haji Alias, *Menunaikan Kewajipan dan Tanggungjawab* [Carrying Out Duties and Responsibilities], (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 1992) Chapter 2, 24-41. See also Muhammad Yusuf Islahi, *Etiquettes of Life in Islam*, 220-237.

³⁶⁵ Akhlaq Husain, *Ibubapa Muslim*, 15-23. See also Muhammad Yusuf Islahi, *Etiquettes of Life in Islam*, 190-202.

parents to their utmost capability with gratitude. The *akhlāq* literature goes further to specify that children should fulfil promises their parents made which the parents were not able to carry out before death. They are to pay their parents debts if the latter leave any. Parents have the right to consider their children's property as their own. These are rights of the parents to be fulfilled whether the parents are Muslims or not. Furthermore, good treatment and generosity are to be extended to friends and relatives of the parents. All of these obligations and duties are the embodiment of *ṭā'ah* to parents and are supported by the *akhbār* and *aḥādīth*.³⁶⁶ A recent discussion of the subject notes that it is not fitting for Muslims to send their parents to "old folks homes" when they are incapable of taking care of themselves because this would be emotionally distressing for them. Children are advised to be sensitive to the feelings of their elderly parents and to make sacrifices in return for the sacrifices made by their parents to raise them when they were young.³⁶⁷

Problems Concerning *Ṭā'ah* to Parents

Al-Ghazzālī mentions that most '*ulamā*' consider that *ṭā'ah* to parents is obligatory even in matters that are of doubtful (*shubahāt*) categories according to law. For example, if one's parents want one "to eat what one finds loathsome, one must eat with them because to leave what is doubtful is piety but to attain the pleasure of parents is an

³⁶⁶ Akhlaq Husain, *Ibubapa Muslim*, 28-35. See also Muhammad Yusuf Islahi, *Etiquettes of Life in Islam*, 197-205. Note: *Akbār* (sg. *khbar*), is a term used to denote information related to the Companions of the Prophet and other persons instead of the Prophet himself. *Āthār* is usually used concerning the Companions of the Prophet; see Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Abū Shahbah, *Al-Wasīf fī 'Ulūm Muṣṭalaḥ al-Ḥadīth*, (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1982) 17 [henceforth cited as *Al-Wasīf*].

³⁶⁷ Haji Johari Haji Alias, *Menunaikan Kewajipan dan Tanggungjawab*, 43-44.

obligation (*ḥatm*)".³⁶⁸ Al-Ghazzālī also notes a *ḥadīth* where the Prophet is supposed to have said, "Doing good to parents (*birr al-wālidayn*) is better than prayer (*al-ṣalāh*), charity (*al-ṣadaqah*), fasting (*al-ṣawm*), *hajj* and 'umrah, and fighting in the way of God (*al-jihād fī sabīl Allāh*)"³⁶⁹. In the same note, there is a *ḥadīth* on the rights of parents, which is reported by 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar. According to this *ḥadīth*, 'Abd Allāh had a wife, whom he loved very much, but his father, 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, wanted him to divorce her. 'Abd Allāh refused. 'Umar then went to the Prophet with his complaint, who told 'Abd Allāh to divorce his wife.³⁷⁰ Another *ḥadīth*, which is said to be reported by Tirmidhī, Ibn Ḥibbān and Ḥākim, says that the Prophet affirmed that the pleasure of God is contained in the pleasure of the father and the displeasure of God is contained in the displeasure of the father.³⁷¹ Some of the recommendations in the books of *akhlāq* tell the readers to serve their parents in humility and to obey them with full devotion.³⁷²

At a glance, the above prescriptions lead us to think that obedience or *ṭā'ah* to parents amounts to absolute obedience. We must add here that the Qur'ānic verses concerning doing good to parents are placed along with those concerning the worship of God and the command to abandon *shirk*. All of our sources on this topic concur that the way the verses were structured signify that doing good to parents is a form of worship

³⁶⁸ Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī, *Ilīyā'*, "Ḥuqūq al-Wālidayn wa al-Walad", Vol. 3, 238. See also, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, Vol. 10, 179 in which the author mentions that obedience to parents has a special religious position.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 236. According to the retriever of reports (*mukharrij al-akhbār*) of *Iḥyā'*, Zayn al-Dīn Abī al-Faḍl al-'Irāqī, this *ḥadīth* could not be found.

³⁷⁰ *Ḥadīth* quoted by Akhlaq Husain, *Ibubapa Muslim*, 24.

³⁷¹ Muhammad Yusuf Islahi, *Etiquettes of Life in Islam*, 193. See also Muhammad Ali al-Hashimi, *The Ideal Muslim: The True Islamic Personality as defined in the Qur'an and Sunnah* [translated into Indonesian by Ahmad Baidowi], (Jogjakarta: Mitra Pustaka, 1999) 72.

to God and ranks second only in importance to worshipping God. As with *ṭā'ah* to the *ulū al-amr*, the only condition which would allow disobedience is when the parents command sinful acts. As we have discussed in the previous chapter, this condition is rather vague. The culture of *ṭā'ah* has in fact caused a great deal of problems in parent and child relationships. Most often, the problems concern the choice of marriage partner, career choices and infringement upon other personal individual freedom and preferences which the Qur'ān and Sunnah do not prohibit. However, as we have mentioned earlier -- and the most important point that we would like to highlight -- the Qur'ān itself does not use the word *ṭā'ah* with regard to parents. Realising that there is a problem in this area in the Muslim culture, *Tafsīr al-Manār* expounds on it.

Ṭā'ah* to Parents or Filial Obedience in *Tafsīr al-Manār

Actually, *Tafsīr al-Manār* does not discuss filial obedience *per se*. The discussion concerning this matter in *Tafsīr al-Manār* is under the topic doing good to parents (*al-iḥsān bi al-wālidayn*). *Tafsīr al-Manār* raises a more realistic issue regarding *ṭā'ah* to parents which most writings concerning this issue do not. According to *Tafsīr al-Manār* doing good is understood differently by people. One who is knowledgeable would not corrupt and manipulate the scope of doing good and thereby cause hardship to himself. What is agreed among scholars and by *Tafsīr al-Manār* is that doing good to parents is rendering services to them, not raising one's voice when communicating with them, talking to them in a polite manner, satisfying their demands, and taking care of their maintenance (*nafaqah*) according to ability or means. If one has done all this

³⁷² Muhammad Yusuf Islahi, *Etiquettes of Life in Islam*, 196.

but the parents considered it insufficient, one cannot be blamed since doing good should be according to the ability and sincerity of the doer.³⁷³

The most important contribution made by *Tafsīr al-Manār* in this area is to bring forth the issue of the injustices that parents may do to their children. It says, "Some parents make it difficult for their children to do good to them. Indeed they burden their children".³⁷⁴ The examples that *Tafsīr al-Manār* gives are: an instance where a mother marries a man whom she loves but the man hates her children. Another example is jealousy of a mother of her daughter-in-law when the former sees that her son loves his wife. *Tafsīr al-Manār* advises that the mother should have a proper attitude so as not to jeopardise the obligation of the son to do good to his parent and not to destroy her son's marriage.³⁷⁵

Some parents, says *Tafsīr al-Manār*, determine the marriages of their children. The children are married to those they do not like, or forced to leave those they love. Here *Tafsīr al-Manār* reminds its readers that according to the *Sharī'ah*, it is not legal for a woman to be married to a man she does not want to be married to although a virgin must ask the permission of her father to be married. A widow or a divorcee on the other hand has the right to choose her own husband. As for a man, he has more rights in this respect. His father does not have guardianship (*wilāyah*) over him in this matter either at the time of marriage or later. However, *Tafsīr al-Manār* also says that this is the case if the father is ignorant while the son is educated, sound in his judgement

³⁷³ *TAM*, Vol.5, 84.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 85.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

and on the right path.³⁷⁶ On this note, we assume that if a man or woman chooses a marriage partner who is considered immoral by Islamic standards, then the parents have the right to interfere, although their success in preventing the marriage is another matter. The reason is, in Eastern culture, Muslim or not, marriage is as much a family matter as it is the individual's. *Tafsīr al-Manār* notes that there are cases where parents' forceful interference in their children's marriage has caused murder, regret and serious illness.³⁷⁷

Tafsīr al-Manār also mentions other cruelties and injustices that parents inflict upon their sons and daughters. For example parents who hinder their children from pursuing their studies and opportunities to better themselves so as not to move far away from the family. There are also parents who force their children to work in the field of their choice instead of their children's. Among the examples *Tafsīr al-Manār* cites is a father who forces his son, who loves academics, to make his career in trading, in which he has no knowledge or interest.³⁷⁸

Such ignorant parents, concludes *Tafsīr al-Manār*, treat their children "like slaves", are "injurious" to their children, and therefore, "there is no *ṭā'ah* to such parents".³⁷⁹ It says further,

People think that religious injunction [on doing good to parents] is an authoritative source (*ḥujjah*) for parents to toy with the lives of their children according to their whim. The children must not contradict the views of their parents nor oppose their desires even if . . . the parents are ignorant of what is good (*maṣāliḥ*) for their children, *ummah* and religion. This widespread ignorance in addition to that of the parents, act

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 85-86.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 86.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 86-87.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 85; 86.

as impetus to the highhandedness of parents in the affairs of their children. They think that the position of parenthood demands that reason and understanding of the children should comply with that of their parents just as the kings and rulers think that their position is higher than all individual subjects, in wisdom, understanding, and view. Otherwise, they (the parents and ruler) think that their views carry greater weight, even though they are imbeciles, over the views of their children and subjects although the latter are wise.

If the duration of this widespread ignorance is prolonged among our *ummah*, the people who educate their children with personal freedom will enslave our people and remove the authority [of our people] before the end of this generation.

It is important for us to understand that doing good to parents as commanded by the natural religion (*dīn al-fīṭrah*, i.e., Islam), is that we behave in refined manners towards parents in terms of our speech and deeds according to custom, until both of them are happy with us. [In addition], we are to provide sufficiently for their needs as is known in the *Sharī'ah*, according to our capability. [Doing good to parents] does not include doing something which strips off our freedom in personal, domestic, religious or political affairs. If one or both of them [parents] want to control us concerning our conduct, know that this is not something which is good (*fā laysa min al-birr wa al-iḥsān*) according to the *Sharī'ah*. [It is not right] that we should leave doing good . . . and do what is bad . . . for the sake of following the views of our parents and their desires . . . One is not considered disobedient or a bad person [for doing the right thing] according to the *Sharī'ah* and reason. This is what parents and children should know: Doing good does not put an end to freedom and independence (*al-ḥurrīyah wa al-istiqlāl*).³⁸⁰

Clearly, *Tafsīr al-Manār* departs from the traditional position in its approach to the obligation of doing good to parents. Although the message of *Tafsīr al-Manār* is almost a hundred years old, we still find that Muslims are tied to the tradition of blind obedience to parents. The fact that *Tafsīr al-Manār* mentions the injustices of parents in

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 87-88.

such details shows that such practices were prevalent during its time. *Tafsīr al-Manār* also makes an interesting observation, which relates authoritarian rulers to authoritarian parents, that says a great deal about Muslim culture as a whole. As we read it, we cannot help but to relate this to the existing situation of Muslims with a leadership, which commits injustices to its own people, and as *Tafsīr al-Manār* demonstrates, is a result of the people's malpractice of obedience to their leaders. The fact is, as alluded by *Tafsīr al-Manār*, this improper obedience originates and is nurtured within the home through improper obedience to parents. Considering the time it was written, it has indeed made a brave judgement in stating that there is no *ṭā'ah* to errant parents. It is also clear that *ihsān bi al-wālidayn* is not translated by *Tafsīr al-Manār* as absolute *ṭā'ah*, as commonly understood by Muslims in general, and its interpretation is more practical as it takes into consideration the reality of life.

Ṭā'ah to Parents or Filial Obedience in Tafsīr al-Azhar

Tafsīr al-Azhar, like other *tafāsīr* and *akhlāq* literature emphasises the obligations of doing good to parents. There are 18 pages altogether in 4 different places in which *Tafsīr al-Azhar* mentions about doing good to parents. Most of what is written is the *aḥādīth* and *akhbār* in support of the verses of the Qur'ān which command the said injunction. In writing on this topic, the author of *Tafsīr al-Azhar* includes his personal experiences and his observations of other people, even of his wife as a parent in order to justify in detail why it is important to do good to parents. The emphasis, as we noted earlier is to compensate good with good, i.e., the good of the parents for raising their

children, must be repaid by the good treatment of the children if the latter are to be considered good people.³⁸¹ *Tafsīr al-Azhar* in an emotional and dramatic manner throughout the *tafsīr* tries to remind its readers of doing good to parents. We select here a passage as an example.

Doing good to parents [means] to render respect and services, love and affection. This is the second command after obedience to God (*taat kepada Allah*). It is through your parents that God bestows His great favours (*nikmat*) upon you, which is the opportunity to live in this world. Because of your parents you feel supported in this life. God has decreed and put love and affection in the heart of the parents towards you ever since your eyes opened to look at this world. When you are granted children of your own, you will truly know how your parents love you. Their loyal service (*jasa*) cannot be compensated with money no matter how much. Kindness (*budi*) cannot be repaid with wealth. Kindness can only be exchanged with kindness. When you were small their energy was used up in caring and bringing you up. Even a fly is not allowed to go near you. No matter how deep your mother was in sleep in the middle of the night, when she heard you cry she woke up immediately. Your father went to work very early in the morning for your livelihood. Some people endure years of employment in which they were scolded and shouted to with profanity by the employer. They do not quit their job because [their children's] sustenance depends on it. Even though your parents do not ask to be paid, it will make them happy if you serve (*berkhidmat*) them [in some ways] in their old age. They will be proud of you, they will praise you when sitting with their friends. This will be their happiness in their old age.³⁸²

Like other traditional *akhlāq* literature, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* also emphasises in accord with the command of the Qur'ān and Sunnah the duty to render special care to the mother because she suffers most in caring for her children, is most sensitive to their needs and

³⁸¹ *TAZ*, Vol. 7, 5565.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, 1212.

therefore most deserving of their good treatment.³⁸³ When discussing the topic, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* emphasises only good treatment and dealings with parents. Like many *tafāsīr*, modern and traditional, it emphasises that the Qur'ān enunciates specific command on doing good to parents but does not mention that parents should do good to their children. According to *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, this is because taking care of children on the part of parents is natural, as if God has placed a natural instinct in mankind to love their children.³⁸⁴ Commenting on *Sūrah* 46: 15 where it reads, "In pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth", the author of *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, Hamka writes,

God wants to remind people of good breeding concerning the difficulties faced by pregnant mothers and the difficulties of childbirth! All of us see these difficulties. A mother suffers because of pregnancy and suffers because of childbirth, but her suffering increases her love . . .

. . . The more children she has, the more her body weakens but love for her children does not diminish.

We can compare them to pelicans that give their chicks to drink their blood and then die without any regret. We see many mothers like this. My own wife, the mother of my children had ten children, . . . in addition to two that died and two miscarriages, which thus totalled fourteen. In the end, pregnancy stopped by itself, her body had weakened tremendously and she suffered from many illnesses. She died at the age of fifty-seven.

[It is as if due to this], that God made the command to respect, do good deeds, and render services to parents an obligation. And we do not find verses of the Qur'ān or *ḥadīth* that command a father or mother to raise their children well because raising

³⁸³ Ibid., Vol. 7, 5567-5568; Vol. 9, 6650-6654.

³⁸⁴ See *TAZ*, Vol. 9, 6651. See also Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 6, 3261; *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, Vol. 10, 185. See *TAZ*, Vol. 9, 6651.

children, even though it is not commanded, will be accomplished as a result of love and affection.³⁸⁵

Tafsīr al-Azhar does not discuss the problem that may occur in practising *ṭā'ah* to parents. The closest it gets to discussing the issue is when explicating *Sūrah* 31: 15 where the beginning of the verse reads, "If they [your parents] strive to make you join in worship with Me [Allah] things that you have no knowledge, obey them not [*lā tuti'humā*] but bear their company in this life with justice (and consideration) and follow those who turn to Me . . . ". At this juncture, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* asks the rhetorical question, "In that situation, can it not be considered disobedience (*durhaka*) to parents?"³⁸⁶ It seems that this question emphasises the importance of obedience in general. However, when the parents desire that the child commit *shirk*, that obedience should not be rendered considering that *shirk* has many subtle implications.

Thus, we can say that unlike *Tafsīr al-Manār*, the issue of disobedience to parents does not arise at all in *Tafsīr al-Azhar*. In fact, the author tells the reader that although he was known to be a disobedient child when he was young, the sense of being obedient came so early to him that he agreed to marry the woman his father had chosen for him, and did a number of deeds that made his father happy.³⁸⁷ This shows that the *milieu* and sentiments of the author do not correspond with those of the author of *Tafsīr al-Manār*, either because Malay society was not ready to accept the radical ideas of *Tafsīr al-Manār* or because Hamka himself does not support such ideas. However, in his book *Lembaga Hidup*, Hamka, indicates in a subtle manner, that he disapproves of

³⁸⁵ TAZ, Vol. 9, 6651.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., Vol. 7, 5568.

the parent who disallows his son from studying abroad because he fears moral corruption of his son, if the father is far from his sight. Hamka argues that if the son is of bad character he does not have to be far away from his father to be immoral.³⁸⁸ Considering that Hamka is not one who has any fear whether his view will be accepted by society or not, we assume that *tā'ah* to parents is not an issue to him since the Qur'ān commands doing good to parents and not absolute *tā'ah*.

***Tā'ah* or Obedience of a Wife to Her Husband**

Tā'ah to the husband has been understood and accepted as an important principle in Muslim marriage. No one can portray better the notion of obedience to the husband than Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī. Concerning the rights of the husband over his wife, he says,

The best saying (*al-qawl al-shāfi*) about it is that marriage (*al-nikāḥ*) is a type of slavery (*naw' riqq*), and she [the wife] is his slave woman (*raqīqah lahu*). Upon her is an absolute obedience (*tā'ah muṭlaq*) to the husband in everything that he demands from her and concerning herself as long as there is no sin involved in it.³⁸⁹

After making the above statement, al-Ghazzālī provides numerous *akhbār* on the religious import of *tā'ah* to the husband and to support this position. Below are the *aḥādīth* or *akhbār* quoted by al-Ghazzālī, two of which were mentioned at the beginning of this chapter:

³⁸⁷ Ibid., Vol. 9, 6655-6656.

³⁸⁸ Hamka, *Lembaga Hidup*, (Melaka: Penerbitan Abbas Bandong, 1976) 173.

³⁸⁹ *Ihyā'*, "Ḥuqūq al-Zawj 'alā al-Zawjah", Vol. 3, 64.

1. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Any woman who dies while her husband is pleased with her enters paradise".³⁹⁰

2. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "If I were to command someone to prostrate before another, I would order a woman to prostrate before her husband because of the enormity of his rights over her."³⁹¹

3. A man went on a journey and pledged with his wife that she should not descend from the high ground to lower ground; her father lived in the lowest ground. He (her father) was taken ill and she sent a messenger to the Prophet (peace be upon him) to ask permission to descend to her father. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Obey your husband". Then, he (the father) died, and she sought advice [from the Prophet]; he said: "Obey your husband". After he was buried the Prophet (peace be upon him) sent her a message to tell her that God forgave her father on account of her obedience to her husband.³⁹²

4. 'Āishah (may God be pleased with her) said: A girl came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and asked: "O Messenger of God, I am engaged but I do not wish to be married. What are the rights of the husband over his wife?" He said, "Even if there is puss from the parting of his hair to his feet and you licked it you have not rendered gratitude to him". She said: "Should I then not marry?" He said: "No, get married for it is a good thing".³⁹³

The list of equally chauvinistic *ḥadīths* is by no means exhaustive in *Iḥyā'* or other traditional sources but what we have already listed should be sufficient to make the point.³⁹⁴ The main point of these *aḥādīth* is to emphasise *ṭā'ah* to the husband. While this is not the place to delve into *'ulūm al-ḥadīth* concerning the status and

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid., 65.

³⁹² Ibid., 64.

³⁹³ Ibid., 65.

circumstances of the *aḥādīth* quoted above, suffice to say that all of them are suspect.³⁹⁵

Actually, the use of non-*ṣaḥīḥ* *ḥadīth* in pietistic and *akhlāq* literature is common. It is

³⁹⁴ See *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, Vol. 5, 93; see *Al-Kashshāf*, Vol.1, 525.

³⁹⁵ The retriever of reports of *Iḥyā'*, al-'Irāqī, noted that the authenticity of these *aḥādīth* ranges from *ḥasan gharīb* (good but solitary i.e., less than *ṣaḥīḥ*), i.e., *ḥadīth* 1, to *ḍa'if* (weak), i.e., *ḥadīth* 2 and 4, and *ḥadīth* 3, according to al-'Irāqī is not related by 'Āishah but Abū Hurayrah and it is mentioned that the chain of transmission is *ṣaḥīḥ*. See *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, 64-65, notes 4 and 5, 64; notes 2 and 3, 65. Khaled Abou El Fadl discussed and argued in detail concerning the unreliability of *ḥadīth* 1,2 and 4. According to Abou El Fadl, *ḥadīth* 1 has a grave theological implication since the pleasure of God is contingent upon the pleasure of the husband. *Ḥadīth* 2 and 4 have serious moral and social implications as well as *ḥadīth* 3, if we may add, since it is contradictory to the command of doing good to parents as we have discussed earlier. See Khaled Abou El Fadl, *The Authoritative and the Authoritarian in Islamic Discourses*, 2nd ed. [revised and expanded], (Austin: Dar Taiba, 1997) 66-88. It should also be noted that in '*ulūm al-ḥadīth*, there is a science of substantive or text (*matn*) criticism ('*ilm 'ilal al-ḥadīth*) which according to the author of *Al-Wasīṭ*, "is a science which does not excite discussion concerning it or writing except among the major compilers of *ḥadīth*, among them, 'Alī b. al-Madīnī, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ḥanbal, al-Bukhārī, Ya'qūb b. Shaybah. . . al-Tirmidhī and al-Dāruqutnī". The reason is, unlike the chain of transmission, there is no empirical method to prove that the text of a *ḥadīth* is defective. See *Al-Wasīṭ*, 425-427. However, although *ḥadīth* text criticism is not a novelty in Islamic tradition, due to the reason mentioned above, it is not a new science. The conditions or general principles for the criticisms of the *ḥadīth* text have been laid down. These principles as Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqi in his book *Ḥadīth Literature*, (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993) 114-115, noted are: "a. A tradition must not be contrary to the other traditions which have already been accepted by the authorities on the subject as authentic and reliable. Nor should it contradict the text of the Qur'ān, a *Mutawātir ḥadīth*, the absolute consensus of the community (*ijmā' qaṭ'i*), or the accepted basic principles of Islam. b. A tradition should not be against the dictates of reason, the laws of nature, or common experience. c. Traditions establishing a disproportionately high reward for insignificant good deeds, or disproportionately severe punishments for ordinary sins, must be rejected. d. Traditions describing the excellent properties of certain sections of the Qur'ān may not be authentic. e. Traditions mentioning the superior virtue of persons, tribes, and particular places should generally be rejected. f. Traditions which contain detailed prophecies of future events, equipped with dates, should be rejected. g. Traditions containing such remarks of the Prophet as may not be a part of his prophetic vocation, or such expressions as are clearly unsuitable for him, should be rejected. h. A *matn* [*ḥadīth* text] should not violate the basic rules of Arabic grammar and style. On account of these principles, a large number of traditions which are included in some 'sound' *ḥadīth* collections have been rejected by the compilers of the standard collections of Tradition. Much material of this type has been identified and included in special anthologies of weak or forged traditions, like those of Ibn al-Jawzī, Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī, al-Shawkānī and others. . . . Even in the standard collections of *ḥadīth*, despite the great care of their compilers, a few weak or forged traditions may still be encountered. . . . Some examples of these [are]: a. The *ḥadīth*, reported by al-Bukhārī, to the effect that Adam's height was sixty cubits, has been criticised by Ibn Jajar on the basis of archaeological measurements of the homesteads of some ancient peoples, which show that their inhabitants were not of an abnormal height. . . . e. The traditions narrated by some traditionists to the effect that 'he who loves, keeps chaste, and dies, dies as a martyr' is declared by Ibn al-Qayyim as forged and baseless. He comments that even if the *isnād* of this *ḥadīth* were as bright as the sun, it would not cease to be wrong and fictitious. g. Most of the traditions concerning the advent of the Dajjāl and the Mahdī towards the end of time, are declared by the traditionists [*muḥaddithūn*] to be spurious, and are included in the mawḍū'āt (forged *ḥadīth*) works".

only in the *'aqīdah*, *'ibādah* and law literatures that scholars are scrupulous about the soundness of *ḥadīth* because these aspects are binding upon Muslims.

Although al-Ghazzālī's description of marriage may accord to the common experience of his time, and to the *aḥādīth* that he chose, it is contradictory to the Qur'ān. *Sūrah* 30 (*al-Rūm*): 21 says: "And among His signs is that He created for you mates from among yourselves that you may find peace with them, and He has put between you love (*mawaddah*) and mercy (*raḥmah*). Verily, in that are signs for those who reflect". *Sūrah* 2 (*al-Baqarah*): 187 reads, "... they (your wives) are your garments (*libās*) and you (husbands) are their garments" a parable signifying that "they are mutual support, mutual comfort and mutual protection".³⁹⁶ We do not find in these verses and descriptions any notion of slavery; instead the Qur'ānic idea of marriage is about love, mercy and co-operation between husband and wife. In other verses that describe men and women in general, both are mentioned as equals. For example,

And their Lord has accepted and answered them: 'Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you whether male or female. You are of each other'.

[*Sūrah* 3 (*Āli 'Imrān*): 195]

The believers, men and women (*al-mu'minīna wa 'l-mu'mināt*) are protectors (*awliyā'*) of each other. They enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil, they observe prayers and practice charity, and obey God and His Messenger. On them will God have mercy, for God is Exalted in Power, Wise.

[*Sūrah* 9 (*al-Tawbah*): 71]

For Muslim men and women (*al-muslimīna wa 'l-muslimāt*), for believing men and women (*al-mu'minīna wa 'l-mu'mināt*), for devout men and women (*al-qānitīna wa 'l-*

³⁹⁶ TAYY, 73.

qānitāti), for truthful men and women (*aṣ-ṣādiqīna wa 'ṣ-ṣādiqāti*), for men and women who are patient and constant (*aṣ-ṣābirīna wa 'ṣ-ṣābirāti*), for men and women who humble themselves [to God] (*al-khāshi'īna wa 'l-khāshi'āti*), for men and women who give charity (*al-mutaṣaddiqīna wa 'l-mutaṣaddiqāti*), for men and women who fast (*aṣ-ṣā'imīna wa 'ṣ-ṣā'imāti*)[or deny themselves], for men and women who guard their chastity (*al-ḥāfiẓīna furūjahum wa 'l-ḥāfiẓāti*), and for men and women who engage much in the remembrance of God (*al-dhākirīna 'llāḥa kathīran wa 'l-dhākirāti*), for them has God prepared forgiveness and great reward.

[*Sūrah* 33 (*al-Aḥzāb*): 35]

Cultural Interpretation

Due to verses mentioned above and others like them, scholars like Amina Wadud-Muhsin and Fatima Mernissi think that *mufasssirūn* have been wrong in interpreting some verses in the Qur'ān and depicting men as superior to women, whereas the Qur'ān treats men and women as complementary to each other.³⁹⁷ For example, that which has been interpreted as indicative of the superiority of men over women and an injunction for the wife to render *ṭā'ah* to the husband is taken from the verses below:

Men are protectors and maintainers [*qawwāmūn*] of women, because God has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women [*fa 'ṣ-ṣāliḥātu*] are devoutly obedient [*qānitātun*], and guard (*ḥāfiẓātun*) in (the husband's) absence what God would have them guard. . .³⁹⁸

Sūrah 4 (*al-Nisā*): 34.

³⁹⁷ See Amina Wadud-Muhsin, *Qur'an and Woman*, (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Fajar Bakti Sdn. Bhd., 1992). See Fatima Mernissi, *Women and Islam* [translated from French by Mary Jo Lakeland], (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1991).

³⁹⁸ The remainder of this verse concerns a breach in the relationship of husband and wife and continues with verse 35. In A. Yusuf Ali's translation, pp. 190-191, the second part of verse 34 reads, "As to those women on whose part you fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly); but if they turn to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance). God is Most High, Great". Verse 35 reads, "If you fear a breach between them appoint (two)

Divorced women shall wait concerning themselves for three monthly periods. It is not lawful for them to hide what God has created in their wombs if they have faith in God and the Last Day. Their husbands have the better right to take them back in that period if they wish for reconciliation. Women have rights similar to the rights against them to according to what is equitable. But men have a degree (*darajah*) over them. And God is Exalted in Power, Wise.³⁹⁹

Sūrah 2 (al-Baqarah): 228

Most traditional *tafsīr* expound *Sūrah 4 (al-Nisā')*: 34 [or the *qawwām* verse] by saying that *qawwām* (pl. *qawwāmūn*) means protecting women and taking care of their affairs with the right to command and to discipline.⁴⁰⁰ They related this verse to *Sūrah 2 (al-Baqarah): 228* [the *darajah* verse] where men are distinguished by a degree or *darajah* over women. With regard to the *darajah* verse, the word *darajah* (pl. *darajāt*) means degree, step or level. Given the context of the verse, where the verses before and after it are about family matters, and the specific verse is about disruption of marriage ties, the *darajah* mentioned concerns the fact that men can divorce their wives without arbitration or assistance, whereas, divorce is granted to women only after intervention of a judge. Furthermore, it is understood that men are made responsible by the Qur'ān with regard to the material dimension of the family. Therefore, if the wife is pregnant at

arbiters, one from his family, and the other from hers. If they wish for peace, God will cause their reconciliation. God has full knowledge and is acquainted with all things".

³⁹⁹ This verse is part of the instructions concerning divorce. The verses preceding this are *Sūrah 2 (al-Baqarah): 226-227* which translate as: For those who take an oath for abstention from their wives, a waiting for four months is ordained, if then they return God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. But if their intention is firm for divorce, God hears and knows all things. The verse after is *Sūrah 2 (al-Baqarah): 229* which reads: Divorce is only permissible twice. After that, the parties should either hold together on equitable terms, or separate with kindness. It is not lawful for you (men) to take back any of your gifts (from your wives) except when both parties fear that they would be unable to keep the limits ordained by God. If you (judges) fear that they both would be unable to keep the limits ordained by God, there is no blame on either of them if she give something for her freedom. These are the limits ordained by God. So do not transgress the limits of God. Such persons are wrong doers. *TAYĀ*, 89-91.

the time of divorce, as mentioned by this verse, the husband has the right to return to the wife because he has to be responsible for his child she is carrying. The condition of returning (*al-raj'ah*) being their desire for reconciliation (*iṣlāḥ*).⁴⁰¹

Going back to the discussion on the *qawwām* verse, *mufasssirūn* share with each other the like of al-Rāzī's statement as below:

[God] gave men preference (*faddala*) over women in many aspects. Some of them in genuine virtues, and some in the religious law. As for the genuine virtues, there are two: knowledge and strength. There is no doubt that men have more intelligence and knowledge and there is no doubt that they have the capability to endure hard work. Due to these reasons, men excel over women in intelligence, determination, strength and writing in abundance; and in horsemanship and archery. Some of them were prophets and sages, leaders in high and low positions, upon them is the call for *jihād* and the call for prayer (*al-adhān*), to give sermons, and to worship in seclusion (*al-i'tikāf*). To be witnesses in *ḥudūd* law. . they receive more in inheritance, guardianship in marriage, [rights] of divorce and to take back their wives [*al-raj'ah*], to practice polygyny . . . This proves that men are preferred over women.⁴⁰²

They concluded that men are *qawwāmūn* over women because of these natural gifts from God. In expounding *Sūrah* 2 (*al-Baqarah*): 228, which concern a certain law on divorce, al-Rāzī says that the relative positions of husband and wife are as follows:

⁴⁰⁰ See *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, Vol. 5, 91; *Al-Kashshāf*, Vol. 1, 523.

⁴⁰¹ Al-Rāzī mentions that the return to the wife (*al-raj'ah*), must be (*wujūb*) for the sake of doing good and not harm to the wife. But if there is no desire to do good, there is no right of *al-raj'ah*. In many *madhāhib*, it is taken for granted that men have the right to return to their wives during the waiting period of divorce (*'iddah*) whether the wives want the husbands to return or not. This point is one of the reasons taken by al-Rāzī as an argument for men's superiority over women. *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, Vol. 3, 102.

⁴⁰² *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, Vol. 5, 92. *Al-Kashshāf*, Vol.1, 523. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Anṣārī al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' li Ahkām Al-Qur'ān*, (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' Al-Turāth Al-'Arabī, 1985) Vol. 5, 168-170 [henceforth cited as Qurṭubī].

The husband is like the ruler (*ka al-amīr wa al-rā'ī*), and the wife the ruled (*ka al-ma'mūr wa al-ra'īyyah*) therefore, it is necessary that the husband, due to his position as a ruler to guard the rights of the wife and her welfare. And it is necessary for the wife to accept that exposition of submission and obedience to the husband.⁴⁰³

There is no mention by the *mufasssīrūn* of the meaning of the "similar rights that women have as against them", as specified by the Qur'ān, except that husband and wife should respect each others rights. Unlike al-Ghazzālī who likens marriage to a form of slavery, al-Rāzī says that, "the purpose behind marriage is peacefulness, union, and love, which result in happiness".⁴⁰⁴ He adds that,

The position of woman in marriage is abounding in goodness, since although the husband has a special claim in the marriage, the wife has the right to the *mahr* (marriage gift) and maintenance (*al-naḥaqah*) or full financial support, protection, and caretaker of her affairs, and somebody to stop her from doing what is not beneficial. As a result, it is obligatory for the woman to serve the man.⁴⁰⁵

Considering that the emancipation of women is relatively recent, we will not comment much about the traditional position of women in marriage except to say that theirs is a marriage of subjugation, and therefore *ṭā'ah* is relevant since they are dependent upon it for their well-being. The positive aspect that we gather from the passages above is that it is the responsibility of men to take care of their womenfolk.

While the *qawwām* and *darajah* verses are read as statements of fact that all men are superior to all women, al-Qurṭubī (d. 671 Hijrah) says that *qawwām* is conditional. He states that scholars understood "*bimā anfiqū min amwālihim*", i.e., "[Men are

⁴⁰³ *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, Vol. 3, 102-103.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

protectors of women] because they support them [women] from their means", to mean that if a man becomes unable to provide *nafaqah*, his wife may go to the court for the annulment of marriage, according to the Mālikī and Shāfi'ī *madhhab*.⁴⁰⁶ This shows that *qawwām* has to be earned. Therefore, we would prefer that instead of reading the verse as a statement of fact that all men are superior to all women, we should read it as a command of God for men in general and husbands in particular, that they are to take the responsibility of being protectors of women, providing protection in the spiritual-emotional and physical, not just the economic aspects. Otherwise, the Qur'ānic injunction in the *qawwām* verse would be increasingly irrelevant especially in cultures where women are economically independent. Reality also shows that not all men are superior to women. Some women are superior to some men. For example, cases where women are making more money than their husbands are on the increase, due either to better academic achievement or mere diligence in pursuing economic opportunities. When the economic positions of husband and wife are equal, or the wife's position is higher either in economic or educational terms, the only working solution in any marital or family decision is *shūrā*, as mentioned by scholars and referred to in chapter four, not *ṭā'ah*. This is especially so in modern marriages which are based on mutual love, equality, partnership, co-operation and complementary role where, the interests of both the husband and wife are for the betterment and comfort of their family, as a unit. Therefore, there should be no issue as to who is obeying whom.

Another reason that *ṭā'ah* is irrelevant is due to the interpretation itself. If we read the *tafāsīr*, we will see how *ṭā'ah* to the husband is read into a verse that does not

⁴⁰⁶ Qurṭubī, Vol. 5, 169.

mention the word "*ṭā'ah*" or its derivative, nor the word husband (i.e., *zawj* or pl. *azwāj*; *ba'al* or pl. *bu'ūlah*). The phrase that *mufasssīrūn* read *ṭā'ah* into is "*fa 'ṣ-ṣāliḥātu qānitātun ḥāfiẓātun li'lghaybi bimā ḥafiẓa 'llāh*" which Yusuf Ali translates as "therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what God would have them guard". This verse should be translated as, "therefore righteous women are devout, guarding in secret that which God has guarded" so that its meaning would be closer to the letter of the verse. It is interesting to note here that, Yusuf Ali translates "*fa 'ṣ-ṣāliḥātu qānitātun*" as "therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient" although he still refers this devout obedience to the husband. The reason is that *qānitātun* or *qānitāt* (both are feminine plural active participles) is derived from *q-n-t* which signifies obedience. But this obedience is about humility, piety, and devoutness to God rather than others. It also carries the meaning of worship.⁴⁰⁷ We also noted that even in Lane, when *q-n-t* refers to women, it is used with regard to husbands for example, "*qanatat al-mar'ah li zawjihā*" which means, "the woman was obedient to her husband".⁴⁰⁸ Al-Rāzī interpretes *qānitāt* as obedience to God but adds that it means safeguarding (*qā'imāt*) the rights of the husband. Furthermore, he adds, "Know that a woman is not a good woman unless she obeys her husband (*muṭī'āh li zawjihā*) because God has said, '*fa 'ṣ-ṣāliḥātu qānitātun*'".⁴⁰⁹ Note also that al-Rāzī uses the word *muṭī'āh* (a woman who renders *ṭā'ah*). This begs the question as to what "*al-qānitīna wa 'l-qānitātī*" really means in *Sūrah* 33 (*al-Aḥzāb*): 35

⁴⁰⁷ See Edward William Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, (London and Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1874, bound in Pakistan, 1980) Bk 1, Pt. 7, 2566-2567.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, Vol. 5, 92. See also *al-Kashshāf*, Vol. 1, 524.

aswé have mentioned before. Can we read it as (a) men who are devoutly obedient to their wives and women who are devoutly obedient to their husbands (b) men who are devoutly obedient to God and women who are devoutly obedient to their husbands or (c) men who are devoutly obedient to God and women who are devoutly obedient to God? The only correct interpretation for "*al-qānitīna wa 'l-qānitātī*" is, men who are devoutly obedient to God and women who are devoutly obedient to God due to the meaning of *q-n-t* as established. Also, it would be illogical that *qānit* (masculine singular active participle) should mean a man who is devoutly obedient to God, but *qānitah* (feminine of *qānit*) should mean a woman who is devoutly obedient to her husband rather than God. If we look at the verses of the Qur'ān which employ the word *q-n-t*, we will see that they are referred to with regard to God and worship of God.⁴¹⁰ It is quite clear that the atomistic approach, or verse by verse approach to the Qur'ān led to such a chauvinistic result (or it could be that the chauvinistic attitude causes the atomistic approach).

Another question that comes to mind is, why does the Qur'ān not say "*fa 'ṣ-ṣāliḥātu muṭī'ātun li azwājihinna* [i.e., so righteous women are obedient to their

⁴¹⁰See Qur'ān 33: 31, "Any of you that is devout [*Wa man yaqnut minkunna*] in the service of God and His Messenger, and work righteousness, to her We shall grant her reward twice and We have prepared for her a generous sustenance" -- this verse refers to the wives of the Prophet; 3: 43, "O Mary! Worship thy Lord devoutly [*Ya Maryamu 'qnuti li rabbiki*], prostrate thyself and bow down (in prayer) with those who bow down"-- this verse refers to Mary, the mother of Jesus; 39:9, "Is one who worships devoutly [*A 'mman huwa qānitun*] during the hours of the night prostrating himself or standing (in adoration), who takes heed of the hereafter, and who places his hope in the Mercy of his Lord (like one who does not)? Say: 'Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know? It is those with understanding that receive admonition'; 16:120, "Abraham was indeed a model, devoutly obedient to God [*Inna Ibrāhima kāna ummatan qānitān li 'llāh*], true in faith, and he joined not God with gods"; 2:116, "They say: 'God has begotten a son'. Glory be to Him. No, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth. Everything renders worship to Him [*kullu 'lāhu qānitūn*]; 66:12, "And Mary the daughter of 'Imrān, who guarded her chastity and We breathed into (her body) of Our spirit; and she testified to the truth of the words of her Lord and of his revelations and one of the devout (servants) [*wa kānat mina 'l-qānitīn*]".

husbands]", if that is what the Qur'ān is trying to say by "*fa 'ṣ- ṣāliḥātu qānitātun*"? We assume that it is because "*qānitātun*" really means women who are devoutly obedient to God. That assumption leads to the meaning that when women are devoutly obedient to God, they are also obedient to His Messenger, and obedient to the *ulū al-amr* except when the latter commands what is unjust. Women will also obey their parents and their husbands unless these command what is unjust. But certainly this obedience is conditional and has to be earned in respect or materially. It has to be earned in respect if Muslim women are emancipated and know what is right and wrong. In traditional understanding it has to be earned with material wealth since the livelihood of family depends on men. Therefore, it is incorrect to interpret "*qānitātun*" as "*muṭī'āt li azwājihinna* (women who are obedient to their husband)". "*Qānitātun*" should be interpreted as, "women who are devoutly obedient to God" or "*muṭī'āt li 'llāh*". We would argue that a literal translation of the *qawwām* verse is better suited and relevant for all condition such as this translation:

Men are protectors of [*qawwāmūna 'alā*] women, in what [*bimā*] God has preferred [*faḍḍala*] some of them over others [*ba 'duhum 'alā ba 'ḍin*], and in what [*bimā*] they spend of their property (for the support of women). Therefore, good women are devoutly obedient to God, guarding in secret that which God has guarded. ⁴¹¹

With this translation, men are still *qawwāmūn* over women as long as they earn their *qawwām* status through economic means and more importantly through a vital role as

⁴¹¹ I borrowed this translation from Amina Wadud-Muhsin, with some changes. See Amina Wadud-Muhsin *Qur'an and Woman*, (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Fajar Bakti Sdn. Bhd., 1992) 70. Note that the Qur'ān does not mention specifically whether it were men or women who were preferred.

an emotional support and comfort, and an equal important partner contributing to the well being and the harmony of their family, even though they may not be able to provide material wealth, in case of loss of income or incapacitation due to accident. Therefore, we are interpreting *qawwām* as the responsibility of men. The ruling in the Mālikī and Shāfi'ī schools that women may seek annulment if their husbands are unable to support them in economic terms, while it might have been relevant during its time (and still is in certain circumstances), is disruptive for family life. Furthermore, this translation in no way assumes the superiority or inferiority of anyone. In addition, it also shows clearly that the Qur'ān does not command women to obey their husbands, but that they should act ethically and morally as befit good women who are devout.

Perhaps we should also recount a *ḥadīth* from al-Bukhārī, which in our understanding is a proof, that *ṭā'ah* to the husband is not commanded by God as the *mufasssirūn* insist, nor the Prophet. This is a long *ḥadīth* from 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb concerning the discord between the Prophet and his wives which led the Prophet to leave them and retire by himself. 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb says,

We, the people of Quraysh dominate our women. When we arrived in Medina, we saw that the Anṣār let themselves be dominated by theirs. Then our women began to copy their habits. I shouted at my wife [one day], and she retorted against me and I disliked that she should answer me back. [Responding to my reproaches], she answered, "You reproach me for answering you! By God, the wives of the Prophet answer him back and one of them left him through out the day until nighttime". The talk scared me and I said to her, "Whoever has done so will be ruined!".⁴¹²

⁴¹² *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, "Book of Marriage", (Lahore: Kazi Publications, 1979) Vol. 7, 87-92.

‘Umar dressed himself and went to his daughter, Ḥafṣah, one of the wives of the Prophet for confirmation of the news and Ḥafṣah affirmed positively. Therefore, he said,

Aren't you afraid that God may be angry for the anger of the Messenger of God and thus you will be ruined? Don't make demands on the Prophet, don't answer him back. Don't be sulky with him. Ask me for whatever you need and don't be tempted to imitate your neighbour [i.e., ‘Āishah, another wife of the Prophet] in your manners for she is more charming than you and more beloved to the Prophet.⁴¹³

Some time passed and ‘Umar heard that the Prophet had divorced all his wives and was very alarmed because he thought that the divorce had most probably happened due to the behaviour of the Prophet's wives. He sought permission to see the Prophet but was refused until he asked for a third time. After permission was granted and he entered the Prophet's chamber, he asked if he had divorced his wives. The Prophet said, "No", and ‘Umar was overjoyed and exclaimed, "*Allāhu Akbar* (God is Great)". After that he appealed to the Prophet saying, "Will you heed what I say, O Messenger of God?" so that the Prophet would listen to his complaint with regard to the women being more assertive since they arrived in Medina. The Prophet smiled. Then ‘Umar pleaded with the Prophet to listen to him again concerning what he said to his daughter, i.e., to be humble and obedient to the Prophet. The Prophet smiled for a second time. When ‘Umar saw the Prophet smiling, he sat down. He made some comments concerning the wealth of the Persians and the Romans as compared to what he saw in the Prophet's chamber and only then did the Prophet start to converse with him. The *ḥadīth* also mentions that the Prophet left his wives for twenty-nine days, after which the Prophet

gave his wives the option whether to leave him or stay with him. They all decided to stay.⁴¹⁴

From the *ḥadīth*, we can see that ‘Umar tried to tempt the Prophet twice to discuss the new development with the women of Quraysh in their assertiveness towards their husbands, referring not only to the new Islamic community in general, but to the problem in the household of the Prophet himself, the model man. Yet, the Prophet only smiled. He could have divorced his wives, beaten them or proclaimed some sort of law against them in front of his eager ally, like lesser men would do. The Prophet, however, at the height of his anger, left his wives for a month to cool off.

Tā‘ah or Obedience of Wife to Husband in Tafsīr al-Manār

Tafsīr al-Manār’s treatment of *tā‘ah* of wife to the husband is dependent on traditional *tafsīr*. Although it does not treat *tā‘ah per se*, it reiterates the qualities that men have which women supposedly do not. *Tafsīr al-Manār* considers the *qiwāmah* of men over women a natural fact, a God given preference, i.e., those qualities stated by the *tafsīr* we have mentioned earlier, which therefore make them leaders of women. In fact, it adds other virtues to men, that is, men are more beautiful than women, and refers to the animal kingdom particularly to the hen and cockerel, and lion and lioness as a rational proof of this statement. It also adds that men are more complete beings.⁴¹⁵ We have not seen these statements in the other *tafsīr* we have discussed.

Explicating the *qawwām* verse, *Tafsīr al-Manār* says:

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

It is well known and accepted that men are responsible in taking care of women by giving them protection, leadership, guardianship and financial support. It is obligatory for men to do *jihād* but not women because men are responsible for protecting them. The portion of men's inheritance is larger than women's because men are responsible to provide maintenance but not women. This is due to the fact that God has preferred men over women from the beginning of creation.⁴¹⁶

It adds that natural law, which gives men might and strength, gave them capacity and capability for acquisition of wealth and therefore men's ability to provide for women.⁴¹⁷ This is a necessity in order for women to carry out "their natural duties such as being pregnant, giving birth, and caring for small children".⁴¹⁸

This discussion of the natural inclination digresses in an interesting way to a discussion about the position of women. While discussing the obligation of men to pay maintenance or *nafaqah* to their family, *Tafsīr al-Manār* states that the *mahr* or marriage gift is compensation for women for entering the marriage tie that places them under men's leadership. It says,

The *sharī'ah* honoured women when it made [*mahr*] an obligation for men to pay women as a compensation on a matter which nature has already determined. This matter pertains to man protecting woman, which became a custom and followed by people for the sake of goodness. [By accepting the *mahr*], it is as if women willingly lower their status from perfect equality with men to allowing men to have one *darajah* above women, which is the *darajah* of protection and leadership.⁴¹⁹

In other words, what *Tafsīr al-Manār* is trying to say by the quotation above is that women are inferior to men by nature, but the Islamic *sharī'ah* honours women by

⁴¹⁵ See *TAM*, Vol. 5, 69.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁴¹⁷ See *Ibid.*, 67.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, 69.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 67-68.

making it an obligation to compensate women with the *mahr* by making it seem that they voluntarily give up their equality with men for material gain. Clearly, this is *Tafsīr al-Manār*'s interpretation of *mahr* since the Qur'ān, the source of *sharī'ah*, calls it a gift (*niḥlah*).⁴²⁰ There is a *ḥadīth* which says that *mahr* may be as little in value as an iron ring if a man is extremely poor.⁴²¹ According to the same *ḥadīth*, since he could not even find an iron ring, the Prophet asked the man to teach his wife something that he knows, in this case, a few *sūrahs* from the Qur'ān which he memorised. If we are to understand the *ḥadīth* properly, surely we cannot consider such *mahr* as compensation for the loss of women's perfect equality with men, but only a gift as a preliminary to a lifetime relationship.

Due to the idea that women are less than men, *Tafsīr al-Manār* takes for granted that the wife has to obey the husband, and like the traditional *tafāsīr* we mentioned, interprets *qānitāt* as *ṭā'ah* to God as well as the husband but with the addition, "according to what is good (*ma'rūf*)".⁴²² Therefore, it criticises the *aḥādīth* in which the Prophet was supposed to have said, "If I were to command someone to prostrate to another, I would command woman to prostrate to her husband", and "If a man commands his wife to move from the black mountain to the red mountain, and again from the red mountain to the black mountain for whatever reason, she has to do it", as a useless obedience. The wife should obey only that which is as good and beneficial for

⁴²⁰ See Qur'ān 4: 4 which reads, "Give women their dower [upon marriage] as a gift; if they remit any part of it voluntarily, take it with good pleasure".

⁴²¹ See *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, "Book of Marriage", Vol. 7, *Ḥadīth* no. 58; 42-43.

⁴²² *TAM*, Vol. 5, 70.

herself as for her husband.⁴²³ It states that the idea of the superiority of men over women is accepted as a general rule, but also admits that there are many "women who are superior to their husbands in knowledge, labour and enterprise, even in physical strength and efficacy in acquisition of wealth".⁴²⁴ In its interpretation of the *darajah* verse, where the phrase "women have similar rights as against them" is mentioned, *Tafsīr al-Manār* asserts that this is a proof of the equality of men and women. It also mentions that Islam commands both men and women to do good deeds and that their social and spiritual responsibilities are the same.⁴²⁵ However, not forgetting that men are a degree above women, it says that this verse should give guidance as how men should treat women in the relationship, i.e. with kindness. Here *Tafsīr al-Manār* tries to portray men/women relationship as co-operative and complementing each other, with men being the leader, since it sees marriage as a social institution which would be inoperative without a leader.⁴²⁶ Another point discussed with regard to the above mentioned verse is distribution of labour between husband and wife. It says that in general, women work inside the home and men work outside. However, it adds that this rule does not deny each spouse seeking help in his or her work from the other when necessary.⁴²⁷

We find the insistence on *ṭā'ah* to the husband in *Tafsīr al-Manār* inconsistent with its idea of the equality of men and women. In fact, there are quite a number of contradictions in the quotations we have examined, as if *Tafsīr al-Manār* is not sure

⁴²³ Ibid., Vol. 2, 379.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 377.

⁴²⁶ Ibid., 375; 380.

whether women are equal to men or not. It seems to us, equality is more consistent with *shūrā* instead of *ṭā'ah*, as *Tafsīr al-Manār* itself has preferred in the relationship between citizens and the state. Nevertheless, we can appreciate that *Tafsīr al-Manār*'s idea regarding this matter is reflective of the times and society in which it was written and acts as a starting point in acknowledging the equal status of women to men even though this status was given by religion, according to *Tafsīr al-Manār*, instead of nature. It would indeed be difficult for *Tafsīr al-Manār* to envision equality of men and women at a time when the majority of women were illiterate, and ignorant about the world surrounding them.

Overall, we can summarise what *Tafsīr al-Manār* wants to convey in a few sentences. On the one hand, men and women are equal because they have the same religious, moral and social responsibilities. We would add that stating otherwise would be contrary to the Qur'ān which thus signifies that this equality is given by the *sharī'ah* or religion. On the other hand, due to mental, physical and biological difference, women are not seen as equal. In fact according to *Tafsīr al-Manār*, men are superior to women by nature and therefore given a degree above women as their leaders. This leadership encompasses the responsibility in financial support and guidance, decision making and in other places, *Tafsīr al-Manār* also mentions education and discipline. In the family wives have to obey their husbands since they are their leaders. However, the wives should obey only in what is good and right according to religion. Perhaps what we have thought of as an inconsistency in *Tafsīr al-Manār* does not exist at all. Perhaps, *Tafsīr al-Manār* does not really consider men and women equal. However, it

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 379.

insists that women be treated better because these are rights given by the Qur'ān. Therefore, *ṭā'ah* to the husband is relevant according to *Tafsīr al-Manār*.

Ṭā'ah* or Obedience of Wife to Husband in *Tafsīr al-Azhar

The premises of *Tafsīr al-Azhar* are exactly the same as those of *Tafsīr al-Manār* with regard to the position of men, that they are leaders of women. It translates the beginning of the *qawwām* verse as, "Men are leaders of women because God has given more to some than to the other".⁴²⁸ It then goes on to say,

This is the most important reason why men are given two parts of inheritance compared to women, why men have to pay *mahr* (*mahar*), why men are commanded to live in a good manner with their wives. Why are men allowed to have four wives as long as they can be just but not women? This verse is the answer. It is because men are leaders of women, women are not leaders of men and [they are] not equal in status . . .⁴²⁹

Comparing *Tafsīr al-Manār's* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar's* discussion on the *qawwām* verse, there is no doubt that *Tafsīr al-Azhar* swallowed totally the idea of *Tafsīr al-Manār* on this subject. However, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* is more consistent in its argument even though we may not agree with it. It considers women unequal to men, and therefore *ṭā'ah* is quite relevant. With regard to the verse which mentions *qānitāt*, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* translates it as "Therefore, good women are those who are obedient (*taat*)".⁴³⁰ It interprets *taat* as "obedience to God, and obedience to the rules as women, as wives, the rules concerning responsibility in the home, towards taking care of properties, their

⁴²⁸ TAZ, Vol. 2, 1195.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Ibid., 1197. In Malay this part of the verse is translated, "Maka perempuan yang baik-baik ialah yang taat".

husbands and the education of children".⁴³¹ Thus, when we look at *Tafsīr al-Azhar* and *Tafsīr al-Manār*, we can see that both have mellowed down on *ṭā'ah* quite a little bit compared with the traditional *tafāsīr*. This seems to signify the acceptance of a better position and perception of women. At least both *tafāsīr* are concerned that *ṭā'ah* should be rendered to what is *ma'rūf* or good and beneficial.

As with *Tafsīr al-Manār*, in interpreting the *darajah* verse in which women are mentioned as having rights, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* concedes that this part of the verse is very important. *Tafsīr al-Azhar* admits that women have rights as well as responsibilities just as men have rights and responsibilities. It says that,

Women are not only for doing this or doing that, for example, [in our custom] they must serve their husbands, they cannot disobey and must always *taat*; but they have rights to be appreciated; have rights on their properties as they have rights upon themselves. If there should be a problem in the home, it is not only upon women that the blame is placed, but it should be questioned if the husbands are negligent in performing his duties.⁴³²

The author of *Tafsīr al-Azhar* related the above statement to his childhood observation that when people used to consult his father i.e., Shaykh Abdul Karim, concerning marital problems, the women were always blamed no matter who was at fault. Women were always the ones to be asked to seek for forgiveness from their husbands. It was commonly taken for granted that this is the fate of women. He adds that the wife is obliged to respect and serve her husband, but she has no right to demand that her husband be sensitive about her feelings.⁴³³

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Ibid., Vol. 1, 536.

⁴³³ Ibid., 536-537.

Like *Tafsīr al-Manār*, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* also admits that the responsibilities which God has bestowed upon men and women such as with regard to faith, doing good deeds, worship and social interaction are the same, and gives some examples from the time of the Prophet. Women even participated in *jihād* with men, it says, though not as soldiers, but as cooks and nurses.⁴³⁴ This implies that though women have the same responsibilities, the scope of their obligation is less. It is emphasised that if men have rights to education, so do women. The *tafsīr* asks the rhetorical question that since women have so many responsibilities, what would happen if they were left to be ignorant?⁴³⁵ In relation to women's rights in Islam, it aptly says that, "If there are women's movements in the Muslim world asking for women's rights, the reason is not that Islam does not give women any, but is because of men who always want to be powerful and deny women their given rights".⁴³⁶

Conclusion

We notice that *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, in dealing with the issue of *tā'ah* in the family, have not derived a principle which can be used to recognise and define the concept of *tā'ah*. They employ different standards in dealing with *tā'ah* to parents and *tā'ah* to the husband. This is especially obvious since the verses of the Qur'ān dealing with *tā'ah* in the family do not use the word *tā'ah* in the form of commands to observe *tā'ah* to parents and husbands.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 537.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

In the case of *ṭā'ah* to parents, we have shown that traditional *tafsīr* and the *akhlāq* literature portray *ṭā'ah* to parents as almost absolute. In this area, *Tafsīr al-Manār* has diverged a great deal from the traditional perspective. In fact, in *Tafsīr al-Manār*'s view, there is no *ṭā'ah* to parents, but only doing good to them by treating them with respect and honour, giving children great freedom and choice to choose what is right for themselves. The fact that *Tafsīr al-Manār* is able to make a connection that subjugation by parents leads to subjugation by political leadership due to the malpractice of *ṭā'ah* should be dealt with as an indication of the danger of not dealing with the issue of *ṭā'ah* accordingly. On this issue, *Tafsīr al-Manār* has helped Muslims to comprehend their situation.

However, with regard to the issue of *ṭā'ah* of the wife to the husband, *Tafsīr al-Manār* insists on the observance of *ṭā'ah*. Is it relevant to question whether this is due to the writer being a man as opposed to woman? Did he not recognise the abusive power of *ṭā'ah*? Although he claims that Islam admits only *tā'ah* to the *ma'rūf* (what is good and just) just as *ṭā'ah* to the *ulū al-amr*, who is going to control what is *ma'rūf* or not. This is especially so since it is accepted that men are allowed to "discipline" their wives, if they are considered disobedient, even though the Prophet's tradition is against it. It should be mentioned that there is a difference between *ṭā'ah* to God and *ṭā'ah* to the husband. God does not command a woman not to visit her sick father (in fact, she would not be doing good to parents if she did not visit him), but a husband would. Similarly, God does not command a woman to get him a glass of water in the middle of the night while she was in a deep sleep and yell at her if she does not, but a husband

would do this. Who is to decide whether the command of the husband in the examples above are *ma'rūf* or not? We cannot deny, however, and it is well known that *Tafsīr al-Manār* champions the rights of women already given by the *sharī'ah*, and tries to raise the status of Muslim women. This, in itself is a very important contribution.

As for *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, its contribution in all cases is the dissemination of the ideas of *Tafsīr al-Manār* in the Malay world. Although *Tafsīr al-Azhar* concedes on *ṭā'ah* to parents, it seems to us that it does not take the word seriously. It uses *ṭā'ah* to mean doing good to parents. With regard to the relationship between husband and wife, it insists on the observance of *ṭā'ah* on the part of the wife to the husband, and like *Tafsīr al-Manār* asserts that the relationship between the husband and wife should be one that is complementary and co-operative.

One thing that is clear from these discussions is that the Qur'ān has to be interpreted and reinterpreted according to Islamic moral and social needs. Due to changes in social conditions and time, meaningful co-operation and complementary relationship in a marriage can only be achieved if both partners have equal responsibilities and rights. Therefore, in this case, *ṭā'ah* is quite irrelevant; *shūrā* or consultation would be more conducive to a happy and satisfying relationship with either parents or spouses.

Conclusion

The main subject of this thesis is the concept of *ṭā'ah* or obedience, we have also discussed a few related to it and they have been important in determining the conclusion of this thesis. There are two major concerns that we have touched upon in this study. The first one concerns the worldview of Muslims which the Muslim Modernists have contributed through their approaches to modern *tafsīr* which vindicate Muslim belief in the adaptability of the Qur'ān to the context of the modern life. One of the results of the articulation of these ideas lies in *Tafsīr al-Manār*. These points are discussed in chapter one. Chapter two is an introduction to an important proponent of Islamic Modernism in Indonesia, Hamka, who exerted a great influence on other Malay speaking countries in Southeast Asia, particularly Malaysia, through his prolific writing and public speeches. One of his contributions in this area is recorded in the voluminous writing *Tafsīr al-Azhar*. Our second and equally important concern which is related to the issue of the Muslim worldview is the theological concern, which has an implication on the ethical-moral issue of *ṭā'ah*. In our discussion of *ṭā'ah* we have provided a comparison concerning its treatment according to the traditionalists and Islamic Modernists, using respective sources. Our discussion of *ṭā'ah* is divided into three parts: *Ṭā'ah* to God and His Messenger is discussed in chapter three, *Ṭā'ah* to the *Ulū al-Amr* in chapter four, and *Ṭā'ah* in the Family in chapter five. *Ṭā'ah* to the *Ulū al-Amr* is divided into *Ṭā'ah* to Political Leadership and *Ṭā'ah* to the '*Ulamā*', while *Ṭā'ah* in the Family is divided into *Ṭā'ah* to Parents and *Ṭā'ah* of Wife to the Husband. In this part, we will highlight all the important points mentioned, and discuss the contribution

of *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar* as modern *tafsīr*, in their interpretation of *tā'ah*.

We have mentioned that the concept of *tā'ah*, due to its moral-ethical implication is related to *'ilm al-'aqīdah* or *'ilm al-tawhīd*. We have discussed *tā'ah* in relation to the transformed *'ilm al-tawhīd* or *uṣūl al-dīn*, not the dry traditional *uṣūl al-dīn* which discusses issues concerning God that fail to relate to the practical, everyday human action and its implication for the moral-ethical conduct of the people. This transformation was the contribution of Muslim Modernists the like of Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh and his followers. It was an important transformation, because the traditional version of *uṣūl al-dīn* was so concerned with the power of God and faith that belief in it lead mankind to passivity. Considering that the purpose of religion is to guide mankind on how to live, and to know their true position in relation to God and their fellow beings, it is therefore ironic that the traditional study of *uṣūl al-dīn* (principles of religion) should lose this purpose over the years. It was precisely due to this reason that the call to return to the Qur'ān and Sunnah was made, and a new interpretation that fit the new situation of Muslims and to correct the wrongs that have been done was deemed necessary by the Muslim Modernists.

Since the Modernists employ the original sources of Islam, the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and God given reason to reconstruct positive ideas, the result is new approaches and interpretation of the Qur'ān which give rise to modern *tafsīr*. Although modern *tafsīr* is largely dependent on traditional *tafsīr*, its new approaches to the Qur'ān, i.e., its holistic approach, its re-examination of the philological aspects of the

Qur'ān, its scientific approach and re-examining the practicality of the Qur'ān as a solution to the modern situation resulted in a marked departure from the result of traditional interpretation. The abandonment of the atomistic approach, and the innovation of the approaches mentioned, have had a tremendous impact on the meaning and the understanding of the Qur'ānic injunctions. The Modernists' call to return to the original sources of Islam, the Qur'ān and Sunnah, reopens and continues the intellectual discussions of interpreting and reinterpreting these sources as done in the early centuries of Islam. This also vindicates the existing principles of Islam, reactivates the activity of finding new and relevant concepts with regard to Islam and Muslims, and also revitalises the activity of searching for answers to the more immediate and relevant questions pertaining to the problems of the Muslims and their value system. The approaches of the Modernists and their theology reflect their ability to synthesise and benefit from the Khawārij's concept of work and faith, the Mu'tazilī's approach to reason and alter the Ash'arī's doctrine of acquisition or *kasb*, and to approach Sufism in a manner acceptable and relevant to the concept of *tawhīd*.

The influence of Islamic Modernism in its articulation of the concept of *tawhīd*, its approaches to the Qur'ān, and its use of reason, that reached the Malay archipelago, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia, was direct from the Middle East. These ideas were disseminated through Malay students studying in the Middle East, especially in Cairo and Mecca, the immigration of Middle Eastern people to Southeast Asia, and the modernist publications. With the spread of modernist ideas, in Indonesia and Malaysia, there arose figures who helped to continue, develop and disseminate these ideas in the

Malay-speaking world. Among the prominent and successful proponents of Islamic Modernism in the Malay world was Hamka, whose ideas are widely accepted by those who identify themselves as modernists. Being a champion of unity, he was supported even by the traditionalists by the end of his career. He was considered a thinker and his *da'wah* activities coupled with his warm personality prepared him to approach all segments of the Malay society and thus won him a great following. The most important contribution of Hamka, like many great reformer, is in the field of *'aqīdah* or religious thought. Although the idea itself is not original, the fact that he was able to present the concept of *tawhīd* in a comprehensive, relevant and cohesive manner in his own *milieu* and affect the implication of *tawhīd* to action consequently earned him great distinction and respect. Hamka's *tafsīr*, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, like *Tafsīr al-Manār* of 'Abduh and Riḍā, is replete with the idea of *tawhīd*. Hamka's *tafsīr* is unique in that it is a model of contextualisation of the Qur'ān in Indonesia, or in the Malay world in which local issues are used to explain the verses of the Qur'ān. In other words, the contribution of *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, is not merely as a tool of disseminating Islamic Modernist thought, but also in disseminating it in a language and idioms that can be understood and accepted by Muslims whose culture is different from the Arabs. Unfortunately due to the nature of the topic discussed in this thesis, the disclosure of much of the interesting content of *Tafsīr al-Azhar* is less.

The conclusion of this study is arrived at by adopting the method of the Modernists, namely by applying the principle of *tawhīd*, and the holistic, philological, practical and rational approaches to the interpretation of the Qur'ān where necessary in

order to understand the concept of *tā'ah*. We have explained the implication of *tawhīd*, and the position of *tā'ah* in relation to *tawhīd* in chapter three. Briefly, *tawhīd* or uncompromising monotheism which is derived from the *kalimah shahādah*, *lā ilāha illa 'llāh* (there is no god but *the* God or *Allāh*) is not only a testimony to the Oneness of God, but loaded with moral-ethical values. *Ilāh*, as we have explained, does not just mean God, but something that we as human beings have raised to the position of god. Thus, *ilāh* means all things that we desire which we would defend at any costs to the detriment of truth and justice. This could be our worldly positions, wealth, self-interests, security, people who can secure for us all that have been mentioned, a certain culture or way of life which contradicts the well being of humanity, i.e., *ilāh* is our base ego. If the *kalimah shahādah* had been stated as *lā rabba illa 'llāh*, the theological differences between Islam and other religions would have settled, since the meaning of *rabb* would refer to the Creator of the whole universe, its Provider and Maintainer, which most religions have in common. When one testifies to *lā ilāha illa 'llāh*, then he or she promises to take only the God as *ilāh* refusing to associate everything and everyone else, even his or her ego. Furthermore, God is described in the Qur'ānic *al-asmā' al-ḥusnā* (the beautiful names of God) among the known ninety-nine names as, the Compassionate, the Merciful, the Truth, the Justice, the Beauty, the Law Giver, the Judge, the One who takes account [of the deeds of His servants and creations], the Powerful, in addition to other attributes. Beside describing the Majesty and Power of God by these names, some of these attributes like the Law Giver, Truth, and Justice imply that if the law given by God, truth, or justice are rejected, then God Himself is

rejected. The articulation of the concept of *tawḥīd*, with the concept of *rabb*, *ilāh* and *al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*, coupled with the concept of Judgement and personal accountability in the hereafter as implied in the *al-asmā' al-ḥusnā* itself, have always played an important role in arguing for the viability of human moral-ethical conduct. The inclusion of Judgement and personal accountability, which always go hand in hand with the belief in God, emphasises that one must always be aware of one's action. No one can be blamed for the action of others, nor take responsibility for them. This implies having the knowledge of right and wrong, the emphasis on reason and ethics instead of blind faith.

Due to the interconnectedness of *tawḥīd* and *ṭā'ah*, both *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar* therefore, explain *ṭā'ah* to God and His Messenger in terms of the principle of *tawḥīd*. Supported with the verses of the Qur'ān, they conclude that *tawḥīd* denies falsehood, injustice and blind following which therefore emphasises rational proofs. It also upholds that the essence of all good is God, Himself. Therefore, *ṭā'ah* to God must be rendered absolutely because what is commanded by God is good for mankind, and *tā'ah* to other than God is conditional upon the command being *ma'rūf*.

With regard to *ṭā'ah* to the Messenger of God, *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar* conclude that *ṭā'ah* is absolute only in so far as the person Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh, acts in the capacity as the Messenger of God, i.e., as the interpreter and expounder of the commands of God in the religious rituals, law and politics. With regard to his actions and opinions that do not have anything to do with religion, law and politics, they may or may not be accepted. This emphasises that the acceptance of

Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh as a Messenger of God is based on rational grounds. In relation to *tawḥīd*, this also emphasises the point that the Messenger of God is sent not to be revered as a cult figure but to be followed in what is commanded by God. As an ordinary man and leader of his community, he has left an example in that his actions and dealing which concern the worldly affairs of the community were the result of consultation with members of the community instead of being decided in an authoritarian manner.

With such a clear position on the concept of *tā’ah* to God and His Messenger as the foundation, and the Prophet acting as a model of leadership, there should not be any problem with regard to *tā’ah* to others. Unfortunately, Islamic tradition has proven otherwise. With regard to *tā’ah* to the *ulū al-amr*, traditional Islamic literature and many analysts have proven that the practice of *tā’ah* has been inconsistent with the concept of *tawḥīd* and the Sunnah of the Prophet. We have mentioned in chapter four that out of powerlessness and convenience, the ‘*ulamā’*’ i.e., the jurists, have sold out the principle of justice, with regard to political leadership, in exchange for order and the implementation of the *sharī’ah* for the Muslim community. With regard to this issue, it is also questionable how much *sharī’ah* could be implemented without justice. We assume that a number of factors such as the level of education, political awareness, as well as the level of poverty of the people, not to mention the indoctrination of negative ideas raised to the status of religious dogma, all contribute to the success of this agenda as it is still happening now. The *ulū al-amr*, both political leadership and the jurists or

scholars played a supporting role for each other in perpetuating ignorance and wrongful obedience among the masses. Through this means, they are able to remain powerful.

Tafsīr al-Manār and *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, as vehicles of reform show a great deal of concern towards this issue. Like traditional *tafāsīr*, they both related the issue of *ṭā'ah* to the *ulū al-amr* to the principle that *ṭā'ah* to other than God is conditional upon the command being *ma'rūf*. But unlike the traditional *tafāsīr*, in *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, *ulū al-amr* is redefined to its proper meaning, i.e., a number of people capable and responsible in the affairs of society. Both *tafāsīr* insist on the implementation of the *sharī'ah* i.e., that the Islamic state should be a *nomocracy*, and also indicate that the closest that the principle of *ulū al-amr* and *shūrā* can be applied to, as to present knowledge, is to something like the western democratic system. However, they claim that the processes should be left to the discretion of the people for the sake of flexibility. This makes their position rather vague, considering that what is needed urgently by the people is a good system that can be implemented. Related to this discussion is the issue of corruption, which pervades among the political elite. However no hard solution is offered but exhortation to moral-ethical conscience to fulfil the *amānāt* or responsibilities. The reason for this is that no matter what the form of political system, corruption will persist if there is no moral-ethical conscience among the rulers and the masses. Although *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar* are vague in the details concerning the political arrangements, they have given recognition to the problems in the political practice of Muslims. The fact that this problem is recognised serves enough challenge to the political leadership. First, they have stated that there is no

tā'ah to wrongdoing and injustice, secondly, by redefining the concept of *ulū al-amr* and *shūrā* to its proper meaning and context, they have rejected *tā'ah* to authoritarianism.

Tā'ah to scholars are treated similarly, i.e., by relating it to *tawhīd*. Since *tawhīd* is based on knowledge of the truth, blind following or *taqlīd* is rejected. The underlying reason is in the value of *taqlīd* which implies the rejection of freedom of thought and creativity, thus making scholars the absolute authority. This articulation can be considered another great contribution of the Modernists. It is important considering that the '*ulamā*' of old, for example, al-Ṣhāfi'ī, Abū Ḥanīfah, Mālik b. Anas, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, al-Ghazzālī, al-Ash'arī, al-Bukhārī, and Muslim, to name just a few that are known to every household, not to mention the famous Ṣufī *shaykhs*, seem to have become authorities higher than the Prophet's among Muslims. This does not in any way mean that the Modernists reject the scholars of old. In fact, they acknowledge the great contributions made by the early traditional scholars but they also want to point out that those scholars were only human and therefore, not infallible. While it cannot be denied that the scholars play a very important role in disseminating knowledge, what is also implied by the Modernists is that the recipient of knowledge has to be critical to the truthfulness of the knowledge. We can say that extreme reverence to the extent of unquestionable obedience to a particular scholar, opinion or school of thought, over a period of time has caused the spread of ignorance because the knowledge of that particular scholar, opinion or school of thought has not been challenged. As we have mentioned in chapter four, when scholars and their followers raised their thoughts, ideas

or policies to the status of religious doctrines and treat them as such, instead of a mere academic issue, a great deal of problems ensue. This is especially true when the issue is concluded wrongly, without contemplating its long-term implication. It is even worse when such an issue concerns theology or worldview because when it becomes ingrained in a person it becomes a habit, and in a society becomes a culture.

Both *Tafsīr al-Manār*'s and *Tafsīr al-Azhar*'s discussion of *tā'ah* to scholars or *taqlīd* have been largely based on their comments regarding the prevalent practices of syncretic beliefs and deviant teachings by Muslims. Some of the problems concern issues in beliefs and worship which include superstition, and others concern issues in jurisprudence with immoral implications. According to *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, all religious practices that do not have any basis in revelation or rational evidence must be rejected or the follower of such practices would be deceiving themselves into doing something that has no benefit, or is even harmful.

With regard to the issue of *tā'ah* in the family, *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar* have differed from the traditional *tafāsīr* on the issue of *tā'ah* to parents. According to *Tafsīr al-Manār*, religion does not require the kind of *tā'ah* which is oppressive to children. What is required is doing good to parents or fulfilling responsibilities as children should towards parents with love and respect. Doing good to parents should not hamper the freedom of children in personal, domestic, religious and political affairs, where these freedom do not contradict with the Qur'ān and Sunnah. *Tafsīr al-Manār* goes one step further by saying that incorrect observance of *tā'ah* to parents could even lead to hazardous results to society and nation because it breeds

passivity in the people and becomes a means of enslaving the people by outsiders. But this also means that this kind of obedience when ingrained in the people can be used as a tool to create a silent and passive majority who will obey any kind of leadership, good or bad. As for *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, it is almost silent on this matter. We presume, based on the examples given by *Tafsīr al-Azhar* itself, that this is because it takes the position that *ṭā'ah* to parents means doing good to them and pleasing them, but not to the extent that it becomes a hardship upon children. After all, the Qur'ān does not use the word *ṭā'ah* as a command with regard to parents.

However, *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar* like traditional *tafāsīr*, insist on the observance of *tā'ah* of wife to the husband, even though the Qur'ān does not use the word *ṭā'ah* in this regard. The word that is used concerning this discussion, is *qānitāt* derived from *q-n-t* which carry the meaning of humility, devoutness, obedience, and worship to God; and it is used to describe good women. It is quite out of the ordinary that both *tafāsīr* did not analyse the meaning of this word. Instead, *qānitāt* is read as obedience to the husband and God by both *tafāsīr*. They also insist, like traditional *tafāsīr*, that a man is the *de facto* leader of his family due to the superiority of men over women. Due to these reasons, they do not ascribe to the idea that men and women are equal.

The difference between the traditional *tafāsīr* and *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar* concerning this matter is that our modern *tafāsīr* do not recognise *ṭā'ah* which is burdensome and not beneficial to the wife, husband and family. They also acknowledge the rights and responsibilities of wives as women and as individuals given by the

religion, and the contribution made by women. Although they consider that there should be differentiation of roles in marriage, it is seen as a division of labour and that the roles are supportive, co-operative and complementary in nature.

While all this is a great improvement compared to traditional *tafāsīr*, the fact remains that from the philological point of view, the Qur'ān does not command *ṭā'ah* to the husband, as it does not command *ṭā'ah* to parents. For all the objectivity, rational and holistic approaches to the interpretation of the Qur'ān by modern *tafāsīr*, when it comes to women, *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar* succumb to the practices of society. The authors dared not or were unable to read the Qur'ān holistically at the time the *tafāsīr* were written and this has caused an inconsistency on the part of *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar*. It seems that this is also due to the fact that the *tafāsīr* do not employ the same principle when discussing *ṭā'ah* to husband as it discussed *ṭā'ah* to the *ulū al-amr* and to parents. Perhaps if these *tafāsīr* had been written in the late twentieth century, and the authors had witnessed that even Muslim women thrive and can be successful if they live in a technologically advanced society, and that the authors were able to accept the reality that women can be as capable as men through equal opportunity, proper discipline and education, the *tafāsīr*'s interpretation might have been different.

It is far from the objective of this study to reject *ṭā'ah* nor good and legitimate leadership or guardianship. Nobody can deny that *ṭā'ah* and leadership is very important for any institution to be governed efficiently. What we want to highlight is that the abuse of *ṭā'ah* is real and it has a close association to authoritarianism in many

aspects and manifestations. To follow the Modernists principle, the kind of *ṭā'ah* which does not have any basis in the Qur'ān, should be rejected. What we have come across so far after examining some key concepts and words from the Qur'ān that are linked to the study of the concept of *ṭā'ah*, is that there is no authoritarianism in Islamic ideals. *Shūrā* has to be implemented from the highest level of government institutions to the level of family as suggested by modern scholars. But there is a lot of work to be done mostly through education, especially where *ṭā'ah* and its abuses have become a socio-political culture.

In any case, the contribution of *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar* is immeasurable. They emphasise that according to the Qur'ān, there is no *ṭā'ah* except to God. *Ṭā'ah* to other than God is conditional to the command being good. This implies having the knowledge of right and wrong. Furthermore, with *tawḥīd* being the foundation of *ṭā'ah*, it also implies personal accountability and Judgement that one is responsible for what one does and does not do. There is no blame on others for ones deeds. Perhaps it is correct to say that if one is oppressed, it is because one has allowed oneself to be oppressed by rendering misplaced or incorrect *ṭā'ah*.

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